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"It was a dream of Sydney Harbour."

(H.M.S. Warrego, home with H.M.Ss. Paroo, Barwon, Bogan, Barcoo, Adelaide, Lachlan and Castlereagh from the China Seas.)—
See page 118.

WITH THE FLAGSHIP IN THE SOUTH

By C. E. W. BEAN,

Lately Special Correspondent of the "Sydney Morning Herald" on H.M.S. Powerful during her voyage to meet the American Fleet in Auckland.

Illustrated with Numerous Photographs and Drawings (including a Water Colour Frontispiece) by the Author.

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T. WERNER LAURIE,
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FLEET STREET.

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To the most capable Man
and most gracious Woman
he is ever likely to know,
this book is affectionately
dedicated by their Son

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It was a dream of Sydney Harbour .. (*Frontispiece*)

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A VOYAGE ON A WARSHIP.

I want the reader to come with me a voyage on a British warship; incidentally to Norfolk Island, Fiji, and Auckland; chiefly to look on at the incessant preparation that is going forward night and day on every British warship in every ocean for some vague future battle. I want him to watch the firing of guns, fighting of battles, the manœuvres and evolutions which, though make-believe to-day, are carried through with enough of earnestness to give him a picture which he can get in no other way, a picture of the great fight which, Tsushima notwithstanding, has never yet been fought—an equal battle between two big modern fleets.

Whether that battle is imminent none can say. Plenty, who will never fight it, are doing their best to make it so. Those who are bringing this Empire and Germany into war think—if ever they do think—that it will go easy for the Empire. Those who will fight it, officers and men too, are not in the least given over to that very foolish mistake. The Navy knows that the German is a magnificent sailor in magnificent ships; and the war would be desperate.

Probably it would be utterly needless and wicked. There is trade rivalry. But what can fighting do for the trade except of third parties who do not fight?

The honest way to meet growing strength is by growing stronger. As for Germany's Continental ambitions, one doubts if they are worth the death of one British sailor. There is only one possible justification for war; and that is if in its heart the German people, as apart from its Emperor, covets some corner of British territory. We do not know that it does. But the Empire must make ready to speak with anyone in the gates. So, for that matter, must Germany.

Yet surely it can be done quietly. Preparation of itself will never cause war. If that comes, it will be through the persistent efforts of those in each nation who are everlastingly sooling it on to the other. If one has been driven to speak bitterly in this place it is because it is intolerable to think that it is not the sensationalist who will suffer, but these brave, quiet, great-hearted men amongst whom for six weeks one has lived. One can only pray that if ever the hour comes when our sea-folk out of their quiet faith and only too willingly are paying in dreadful wounds and tortures worse than death for the wicked recklessness of someone who is well out of harm's way, these mischief-makers may come to comprehend through many a sleepless night and in real agony of spirit some infinitesimal part of the awful responsibility that lies upon them.

Lastly I want the reader to see, for the space as it were of a lightning flash and in what to me was an utterly strange light, the question—which is really the most important in all the Empire to-day—of whether Australia and New Zealand are to have navies and flagships of their own.

The writer has to thank the proprietors of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, who gave their leave to publish these articles, most of which appeared in that paper; the naval authorities, who allowed him to sail on the flagship; certain friends aboard, who lent him the best of the photographs; and many others ashore and afloat who turned for him this trip into a holiday.

When the ship is a dead thing.

Chapter I.

OUTWARD BOUND.

H.M.S. Powerful, at sea, July 12, 1908.

Early on Saturday morning, July 11, H.M.S. Powerful, flagship of the Australian Squadron, slipped her moorings in Sydney Harbour, and with the Admiral's flag at the truck, and her band playing on the quarterdeck, and the red-roofed knuckles of the harbour-side swimming by her, all in a dreamy haze, started on her way to meet the American fleet. She will wait for the fleet at Auckland. She goes by Fiji and Norfolk Island.

It was trespass into Marryatt-land from the jump. Late on Friday night as a small boat from Man-o'-war Steps with oneself and one's belongings was wallowing crabwise around that gigantic ram, a terrible voice bawled high above: "Yai—hai-wai!" The boatman shouted: "No, No!" It seems the terrible person had only been asking who we were, and was really saying: "Boat ahoy!" Even in the dullest times, small busybodies are not encouraged to come about His Majesty's ships after dark. Perhaps at the beginning of the last century, when the Navy was normally at war, the custom grew of asking loiterers their business. Let anyone that reads this

take a boat any night and row past even the smallest warship in harbour. He will be asked what he is about, and expected to answer. If he is bringing the Admiral aboard he bawls, "Flag!"—and the watch on board runs to get the commander or the captain, or whoever should receive the Admiral. If it is the captain he shouts the ship's name—"Powerful!" If a ward-room officer—"Aye-Aye!" A gun-room officer, that is, a junior, or anyone else—"No-No!"

The boatman in every naval port knows the right answer. In Japan a boatman that cannot understand a word of English will often answer that hail. A ward-room officer told me that he was being ferried back to his ship in a Japanese port. Neither he nor the ship had ever been there before. He was not in uniform. But the native boatman, though he could not talk English, knew the ship by her name; guessed his rank; and, when challenged, flung back "Aye-Aye," like a Briton.

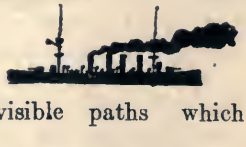
For the rest, the Powerful was that same comforting grey monster that one takes for granted in Farm Cove; the soft white lights on the gangway vignetting a patch of soft grey side above and soft silky water beneath; the great hull softly purring, and the four funnels rolling out rich round creased and crinkled clouds as black and soft as—as the coat of a Persian kitten.

Early next morning the cable came off the buoy, the white ensign went down from the stern and up to the peak; the ship slowly swung to sea. The moment a ship becomes a dead thing, tethered to the land, the ensign which means her life comes down from aloft and goes up at her stern. But when the first breath of life stirs in her again, the instant that the anchor comes off the ground and the ship is free to move, the flag is hoisted at the peak. It matters not if she swings scarcely an inch, lies rocking hesitating which way to make. The thing is, she is free, free and living, free of all the seas, and her ensign is up wriggling again in the fresh air current from the ocean. By that sign, even whilst she lies

motionless, men know she is free—off on some errand of her own which it is no one's business to question.* So on Saturday morning we in our turn slipped out of the harbour on our proper business and with due state.

There is no false modesty about an Admiral's ship when she takes her Admiral to sea. You on shore may only catch on the buffets of the wind the pulse of a distant brass band, and wonder why on earth the Germans are playing at this hour of the morning. But the little community which is bounded by the South Head signal station and Garden Island knows all about it. There are big cities in England where the business of the Navy is the business of the town. There the seagoing or the homecoming of a flagship is the matter of town talk for a day or two. Perhaps a century hence, when Australia is no longer an infant, a great flagship may swing round her moorings at Port Stephens, and swim down stream past dockyards and slips and sheds, past low red ordnance stores, with a whole crowd of grey funnels and masts peeping over them, her music trailing behind her in waves like the smoke from her funnels or the wash from her bows, to furnish gossip for the day to an Australian seaport. . . .

There's nothing that goes quite as direct about its business as a big steamer. A train or a motor-car has to wheedle round hills and coquette with river valleys before it can get where it wants. But a steamer just shakes the dust off its feet, and then makes a bee-line across the world. You can tell where she is going by watching her for three minutes after she leaves Sydney Heads. A merchant steamer steps out of the front door, drops the pilot, looks round, and then starts off on one of the invisible paths which



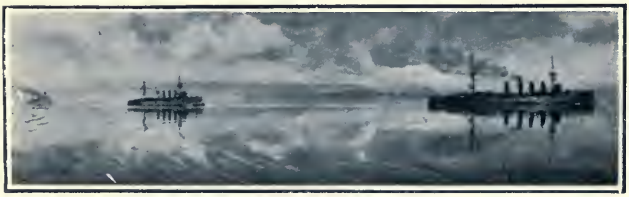
*In the headpiece to this chapter the ship is drawn moored. Here she is the moment the anchor is off the mud. On the last page of this book she is just dropping anchor.

you know leads to some lump of rock or outcropping mountain top some thousand miles or two below the horizon. You know perfectly well that in three or four days the men on the bridge will be looking at the horizon a little over the starboard bow. And just at the time and just in the place where they are looking for it there will crop up a little grey-blue speck, or a quivering, dancing, uncertain flicker, which is a hilltop or a lighthouse in New Zealand or New Caledonia or Norfolk Island or Chili; and, incidentally, has been hit on by sailormen for a fingerpost to show them on their ways about the world.

We did not wait even to drop a pilot and look round, because it is not the way of British warships to carry pilots, even in foreign ports. When warships are most needed there will be no pilots to carry. So when pilots are available it is thought best to do without. Some years ago at a levee of warships to be polite to some King or Emperor, a British fleet quietly picked its way through a maze of Baltic channels and dropped anchor in a German-Danish port with an unpronounceable name. The foreign newspapers were surprised, and some German cruisers followed our fleet in, keeping carefully hull down over the horizon, playing an interesting little game in which we figured as enemy. But it was all in the day's work for the Royal Navy. It slipped unostentatiously in before it was expected, moored itself at the inshore position, which the Germans had marked out for themselves, and made a very good show for a week.

It took quite a long time to get rid of Sydney. We were out of its harbour in half an hour; but not out of its smoke. A thin brown smudge, as though someone had smeared his finger along the horizon on a newly-painted picture, covered the city so thickly that it could not be seen through the Heads, and stretched far to sea. Two hours after we had left port the tail of that smoke was still to the south of us. If Sydney goes on so, it may develop a real London fog before long; in the distance, this looked a

. . . There is a certain priceless black jewel found somewhere near Cardiff which burns without smoke. . . .



One division of a cruiser squadron running down to moor.

The photograph was taken from the other division, whose wash may be seen in the foreground.

tolerable imitation. Perhaps, if the truth were known, the Powerful may have had something to do with it. She does not generally do business with all four funnels in port. But when she does she produces a cloud worth watching. There is a certain priceless black jewel found somewhere near Cardiff, in South Wales, and supplied to His Majesty's ships. It is called Welsh steam coal, and burns without smoke. It is hard to say what it would not be worth to England in the agony of war. But coal-owners are quite impartial, and supply it by hundreds of thousands of tons to foreign navies also. When they found New South Wales they found no New South Welsh steam coal, more's the pity. The nearest approach comes from Westport, New Zealand, and they bring that to Sydney for His Majesty's ships. "But, bless my soul," said the officer of the watch, as he screwed up his eyes at the rich creamy folds tumbling out of the funnels like the froth from a pewterpot, "bless my soul, she makes as much of it as the whole Channel fleet." Still, it is better fuel than some. There are fleets, they say, which wave a great signal before them to anyone who is within forty miles of the horizon. Look at any photograph of a French warship moving out to sea and smudging out half the bald, round Toulon hills, and you can understand it.*

But the smoke and haze and loom of the land are out of date nowadays. They know of the land and all about it—of the German Emperor's last letter and the result of to-day's steeplechase—long before they see even the faint, blue, hazy mountain tops. Yesterday, a full day out of port, came news of Count Zeppelin starting a line of airships; of Bruce Pearce making another round of 75 in the golf championship;

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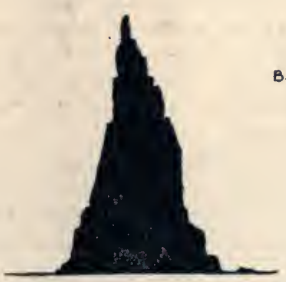
*This is shown in the illustration. Look on the British cruisers opposite or the battleship on p. 103, and then on the American Fleet (burning American coal), on p. 90. These ships are all moving about the same speed. After the American Fleet left Sydney at 8 a.m., the smoke it was making could be seen clearly from S. Head at noon. It was then 40 to 50 miles away.

of a bridge collapsed in Cologne, and something winning the Grand National.

Indeed, these modern nuisances are becoming too much for the comfort of a self-respecting ship. It may be all very well for stockjobbers to turn an Atlantic liner into Wall Street, and finish off their breakfast with a smart deal in Chinaman Gulch options. But for a respectable British warship that has left port and settled down comfortably to make her own destination in her own way, to be switched off like a goods engine to China or Bermuda or the Crozets by a telegraph clerk on the roof of the Admiralty Building in London, is too much of a good thing altogether. Yet that is what they can do nowadays. To take the very newest and latest that science has to give is a way they have in this Navy.



. . . Saw-toothed, like a broken stump. . . .

. . *Someone swore a light flickered halfway up it.* . .

Chapter II.

A LONELY ISLET.

H.M.S. Powerful, at sea, July 13.

We passed at sunset yesterday between two outcrops of rock standing sheer from the Pacific. One swam by square as a lump of sugar against the sunset; the other saw-toothed like the broken stump of a tree. They were Lord Howe Island and Ball's Pyramid.

It is a curious thing that if you take a map and draw a straight line from Sydney Heads to Norfolk Island it runs at about half-way fair down the channel between these two; and they are only 13 miles apart. The Powerful was not steering for these islands, and she could not stop there, because there is coral around them. But her casual way led her straight over the shallow neck between them and out into the deep sea beyond. It was a mysterious passing that. The first faint blue speck lifted itself above the horizon at 2 o'clock—70 miles away. By 6 o'clock the great grey shadow, for all the world like the square, rough-hewn pedestal of a statue, 2850 feet sheer, was just four miles off, slipping by against the yellow sunset. Someone besides me swore that a light flickered half-way up the side of it—and it may well be. There are 120 white men on that ridge and the slip of earth at its foot. They went there in 1840, but what induced them to go there one cannot imagine. At any rate, a good number of them have come away since, for there were 300 in 1859. The whole island, which includes two mountains as steep as the Matterhorn

and a fair amount of beach, gives 5½ square miles to live in—about the size of a respectable Central Division farm. Its people came from New South Wales, and apparently they farm it differently from their mother country. Luckily, it grows a garden palm of the sort that enthusiastic suburban stationmasters plant about their platforms. At present Lord Howe Island lives on that palm.

Now, if these details are a trifle vague, there is an excuse for it. When you are travelling distant seas in a ship, and a small ocean ant-heap slips mysteriously past you in the dusk, you may be very eager to chase all the romantic details about it from book to book until you run them home. But a ship is not a National Library and a British Museum rolled into one. And so why white men went from New South Wales to Lord Howe Island and who they were, and what induces them to stay there, must remain a mystery.

But if they were a mystery to us, it is not hard to imagine what we must have been to them. The farmers' youngsters on the face of their precipitous island of a Sunday afternoon spy an unexpected smudge of smoke above the rim of the sea, and find the grey monster—they know well enough who she is—making up for them; and later in the grey of sunset sweeping through their narrow channel. A few subdued lights begin to peep from her ports; the grey shape melts down again into that wide grey of moonlit sea and sky. Last — only the precarious flicker of a stern-light to show where His Majesty's flagship in the south seas has passed upon His Majesty's business. It is a picture to dream on, not to draw. For if a man has not felt the mysterious fascination that clings like a scent about the passing of a great ship, no description ever penned in cold black ink could bring it home to him.

We passed Lord Howe Island last night. This night comes another event. The ship is at the moment about as far out on the deep waters as a landsman would wish to be. Noumea is 800 miles away. The Prometheus has just rung up from

Noumea. Sydney is over 700 miles. We are speaking to Sydney. To-morrow we shall speak to Fiji and to the Encounter in New Zealand as well—all four at once. There is no outward and visible sign of these marvels. But as one sits after dinner at sea in evening dress, in a comfortably-furnished room, talking quietly, and sees a slip of paper handed modestly in to somebody in authority, read and pocketed like an ordinary telegram, one has quite enough to think upon.

[There is to this chapter a post-script so interesting that one cannot refrain from adding it. Now that the Flagship is safely stabled again in Sydney, one has been able to solve two mysteries; of which the mystery of Lord Howe Island is the first.

Long before New Zealand was ever a colony, when only a white trader or two—tough customers for the most part—took their lives in their hands and built trading stations along the wild coast, three white men hired a whaling captain to take them off with three Maori wives and two Maori boys, and dump them on that forsaken ocean islet which Lieut. Ball had sighted from H.M.S. Supply in 1788 and called Lord Howe. They could not abide it long. A man who called himself an army captain — one Poole — bought them out for £350. They went back to their beloved New Zealand. He ran the island as a speculation, and brought in settlers. That scrap of an island saw a wild time then. They had no laws except a few crude rules, agreed on one afternoon; and some of them would not be bound. Those were riotous rich days in California, and the Pacific was full of American whalers. Most of the islanders had deserted from these. One deserter, a servant of Poole's, would not be orderly. So Poole chained him to a tree. He broke loose, took to the bush on the mountains. A live brigand on an island five square miles in all was too much for their nerves. They caught him and kept him in the stocks. When they became afraid he would grow deformed if left so, they took him out and cooped him in a cask where he had

two positions standing and lying, instead of only sitting; and kept him there until the Sydney authorities heard of it.

In those days Californian whaling captains would leave their wives and children safe in Lord Howe whilst they meandered in the South Seas. And Lord Howe flourished so long as California did. It was nearly made a convict settlement, but Lord Newcastle stopped that. It grew all sorts of fruits. The pig and goat went wild, and are good shooting to this day. There was only one land animal originally on the hills, a white guinea hen with a red bill. But mice smuggled themselves in through an accident and overran every inch of it. There is no plague of house flies. But they say the fleas more than make up for them.

The island lives on its palms—Kentias. Apparently each settler found a different sort and called it after himself or the Governor in Sydney. There is Kentia Moorei, Kentia Forsterii, Kentia Poolei, Kentia Belmoreana, Kentia Canterburyana — and probably Kentia Smithii, and Jonesii and Brownii and Flanniganii and O'Branniganii, for all one knows. Besides these there are great banyan trees on the island, each a forest in itself. One covers three acres.

The peaceful history of Lord Howe—it is part of a New South Wales electorate—consists in having grown onions for Sydney. And where the great countries had their wars, this island has had its one murder. In the '60s an old Irishman killed his son-in-law, a wastrel of a fellow from an American whaler. A water policeman was sent from Sydney. This dread authority held stately inquisition in the island. He came back to report that if the old man had chosen to hide in those dark mountains—Mount Ledgbird or Mount Gower—no man could have found him. But he had given himself up; and seemed to have been first assaulted before ever he broke the other's skull. So he was left on his island.

So much for Lord Howe, with its old ruined farms, its Flagstaff, its Goat Island and Rabbit Island and Soldiers' Creek, which fairly call you to poke about it for a month or so.

The second mystery we saw in Auckland, the wireless telegraphy on the American ships. Curiously enough, the wireless room was the first sight the American showed to visitors; the big gun turrets they were more loth to explain. American wireless is a different system from ours—the Stone System, not Marconi. Their masts were not so exceedingly high as ours now are. With the American wireless the man working it sits with a cap over each ear, exactly like the head-gear of a telephone clerk, and reads by sound. The electric current sent to him by the other ship causes a brushing noise, so faint that it can only be heard through a microphone. So someone has to be wearing this cap at all times, night and day, on the look-out for signals from stations or ships. The work is divided into watches, but even so, is most trying to the nerves.]

The sea telegraph 12.7.08.

. . . *In one of them lived Frere.* . . .

Chapter III.

NORFOLK ISLAND.

At sea, July 15.

In a hundred years or so, when men's chief wonder about this age will be how it ever came to wear trousers, and they will never talk of us except to laugh at quaint, ungainly old buffers who hung dismal sackcloth on their backs and cased their legs in drainpipes—the Australians of those days will look with a little reverence on a certain small island far away across the breast of the ocean. For it is not at home in Sydney or Hobart, but away locked up in this safe, 940 miles oversea, that they keep some of the relics of their earliest history.

It is a tiny island in a huge ocean. It is only six miles long—not as big as a small sheep-run. It is hopelessly lonely; the nearest land to it, the northern point of New Zealand, 400 miles away to the south. And yet as we swung yesterday round the south-western point we could see, four miles away, tucked in low under the steep hills, with a slender white beach tied like a pinafore around them, a line of big

solid, stone houses. As they stand there gaunt with fifty years' neglect, and staring with their unshaded old eyes and jaundiced yellow faces out towards the land that used to support them, one cannot help fancying that they hunger always for the wicked past; and wait anxiously for the day when a certain pot-bellied, wooden sailing ship, with her innocent canvas above and her foul, crowded hull below, shall sweep once more down the roadstead. For only a little more than fifty years ago a red sentry, all white pads and straps and braid, with a thing like a coffee-pot on his head, marched up and down in front of the house on the right. He was set there to guard the new Pacific Islanders, whose life and breeding and thought was of Newgate and Fleet Street, and the Bank; who worked under strange pine-trees, talking the slang and telling the stories of Eastcheap and the Minories. You can still see there a barrack-room, with the old arm-rack round it, where each soldier kept his musket by his bed. There are the long slots for each butt, and the little circles which their muzzles dinted long ago in the wood when they stood them upside down to clean, or of carelessness. Look well at those houses. In one of them lived Frere—Captain Frere, of Marcus Clarke's great story—with his sweet girl wife. Nearer to the shore is a low, grey, tumbled wall. There was imprisoned the man whose life had been one long, steady, passionate love of her. It was all a heart-breaking, tragic mistake that ever he came there, or that she married Frere. They found out each mistake at last, those two, on board of the schooner bringing them to Sydney. And, before the end came in the wild storm under which she foundered, the bitter, dreadful waste of two lifetimes was atoned for by just one minute of perfect understanding.

That story may be overdrawn—and one who knew him has told me that Price, whom convicts murdered afterwards at Williamstown, was only a stern, straight man, and nothing of a monster. But there is enough true colour in the tale to make it worth remembering

when first you run past those yellow relics of Norfolk Island.

The island is nearly square. There is no harbour. People have to land on the side away from the wind if they can—not land at all if they can't; but go on somewhere else and trust for better luck next time. As the lee side of it opened out, we saw smoke rising over the point, and found a large, grey steam yacht lying close in. The island is kept alive by two interests, the manufacture of missionaries, and the cable station. The ship was the Iris, owned by the Pacific Cable, to repair their lines. The flagship swung round the corner and anchored two miles from the hills. There were five hours for a rush ashore.

It was worth it. The island is beautiful enough from the sea. Almost the first things you can make out are certain long, thin trees standing along the whole stretch of its skyline. There is no need to be told what trees they are. Presently you catch the gauzy green of the hills beneath, stooping to the sea in steep dells where they are not shorn into cliffs. But it is from the island itself that the landscape is most beautiful. Two steep hillsides as green as lawns, bending into a narrow valley, down which you look through a long vista of most graceful, high pine-trees. Far below you down the valley the lawn flattens out. The long, low broken wall of some old stone building drawn across it. A thin, even sweep of pale pink sand, with the dark Pacific lazily tripping on to it now and again in crisp, sparkling, dazzling bars of white. And high above and far beyond all, set like an agate in the richest, deepest, bluest sea man ever saw, a single, crude, pink mountain-top of an island. It is as naked as your hand, and rather the shape and colour of it, scarred with orange, tanned to red. It is obviously barren and grassless. But it is the centre of one of the most satisfying pictures nature ever drew.

The peach-trees were in blossom on Norfolk Island. By all the rules it was just as much mid-winter there as in Sydney. But rules do not worry

the trees in Norfolk Island. The bitterest cold in June was 57 degrees, and its hottest midday 71. For almost the whole month the glass was at 64—which is exactly the temperature to which doctors try to engineer a sick-room when the man in the bed has pneumonia. If that is not a perfect climate, it is hard to imagine one. One would think that for anyone who is tired of the modern hurly burly, and content to live most of the year with his books, there could not be a better home than this. One Australian squatter did try it, after the drought. He gave it up, it is true. But think of this. A little house bedded into the great dark trees—a little, shingle-roofed, early colonial house, very grey and old and modest, hiding its eyes deep behind a long shingle verandah with slim, round columns. A neat, square garden closed with a neat, square hedge before. A cluster of the sweetest, delicate peach-blossom cuddled like a nosegay against the side wall. An orange tree or two that can scarcely hold up their weight of golden fruit. A vegetable patch with a clump of banana palms down in the ranker corner where the hill drains away. A little field bent over the brow of the hill, where the rich grass is cropped to a lawn by one shaggy pony. On either hand a thick growth of trees, stouter than the pines, and shorter—white oaks, some sort of giant fig, bushy pines and tobacco scrub. A road of rich chocolate mud winding between green banks to a cross-road on the hilltop. The grey shingles of a house or two peeping from the trees along it. A boy on a pony cantering beyond the hedge. And far down the dell between the hills a startling blue triangle of pure Pacific. They are quite beggarly poor, the people of Norfolk Island—for money. It means selling horses and carts or cows, or even houses, to find the money for a trip to Sydney. But nothing is going to persuade one that they are not rich in comfort on their island. The opinion of this ship seemed to be that they lived in an English park—and this ship ought to know.

They are poor in gold—they have very little indeed—just because others do not give it in exchange for what Norfolk Island has to sell. They could sell oranges, and bananas. If they send them to Australia they have to pay to get them carried; and pay more to get them past the Customs. If they join the Commonwealth, the taxes may come off. But then oranges and bananas grow in Australia already. They could sell yams, and they say they are as good as artichokes; but they have not managed to persuade Australians so. Oranges and bananas do not grow in New Zealand, but there are no boats to carry the Norfolk Island ones there. There used to be schooners once, but they were run out of the trade by the Sydney boats. So the islanders have not an easy problem. "We are prouder to remain under the Imperial Government," said one of them yesterday. As it is they will probably join the Commonwealth, though the best thing would be to take the third course and join New Zealand.

Whether they have money or not, the Norfolk Islanders have not got to travel for scenery with their feet bedded in grass richer than velvet, and that warm, scarred, arid desert rock of a Phillip Island just under their eyes. How it came by its aridity is an interesting story. Though it lies so close to Norfolk Island, there were no men there to carry things from one to the other during the whole time until Cook found them. And they find that, although Norfolk Island has no wild animals save the birds, this Phillip Island and another little rock close inshore have. Their wild beasts are lizards and big centipedes.

Phillip Island has a few Norfolk Island pines. It used to have grass—used to be a perfect pasture like Norfolk Island once. To-day it is only an object lesson. When the soldiers came to Norfolk Island they found nothing to shoot. Even the wild beasts of Phillip Island were not exciting. So they

transplanted some rabbits on to Phillip Island; with such success that there is barely a green blade on it to-day. They say the rabbits have turned cannibal and begun to eat each other. Goodness knows how many millions of pounds it would have saved Australia if some of her early benefactors had only sailed down the channel between the red island and the green one.

There is another pest that has found its way to Norfolk Island only this last two years. The mystery is, how in the name of what is wonderful it did find it. Presumably the starlings do not send out explorers on curves of search over new, landless seas merely for the sake of finding where they will come to. But they have hit on this island somehow. They never found Australia by themselves. They were brought there to ate fruit pests; and eat fruit instead. Now they have found their own way to the peach-trees on Norfolk Island.

About many of the far little islands of the Pacific there is a darker mystery than how the starlings get to them. It is the mystery of how men ever got to them. Sailors come, after punching through one or two thousand miles of blue water, upon some solitary mountain-top—properly belonging to the muddy mountain folds into which the bottom of the ocean is crumpled — sticking up out of the sea, without brothers and sisters, like a stranded merman. It has stood there quite lonely and forlorn for a million years or so. The sea-birds found it, and they may have brought the seeds of a tree or two, which grow there to this day. The land-birds once in a million years were blown there, and stayed there. But man could not be blown there on wings. Whenever he came, he came in the dim past on some brave adventure, in a ten-foot canoe, searching the high seas for a home. Some tiny mountain-tops a thousand miles over the horizon he found, and on them left his mark. Others from the beginning of the world to

this have gone unseen. On Easter Island—by more than a thousand miles the farthest outpost in the Pacific, and only a few miles square—someone has built, goodness knows how, huge monuments in stone, whose secret has died with their makers. The galleys and fleets of some great forgotten nation may—it is almost fair to say must—have ranged, somewhere behind the curtain of the past, from South America and through these seas. If so, they hit Pitcairn Island, for their colossal stone figures still stick out from it. But there was not a vestige of man's work on Norfolk Island. And thereby hangs the most incredible tale of how Pitcairn and Norfolk came by their present people. The ship has talked of nothing else for the last day or two. There are three histories of it on board, and they have been devoured as quickly as they could be passed along; and more especially the story of Bligh's voyage. Whilst old Mr. Cornelius Quintal, a grandson of one of the Bounty mutineers, whom we are taking to his home because the steamers are so far between, has given a lecture on it all to the ship's company for'ard.

Slaves lived pretty cheap, but not cheap enough for the West Indian planters. It filtered through to England that, on the edge of the known world, a tree had been found which grew ready-made loaves. They sent a captain to bring a load of it in a warship. He was Bligh, and she was the Bounty.

Just after the first fleet left for Botany Bay, Bligh sailed to Tahiti. There he gathered breadfruit for six months. The islanders were very pleasant, Bligh very unpleasant. They started homewards; and in the dim hours of one morning Lieutenant Christian, on whom Bligh had borne hardly, found himself alone on his watch. The midshipman of the watch had overslept himself. There in the dark hours on the bridge Christian made up his mind to put Bligh overboard in a boat, and sail the ship back to Tahiti.

Nineteen in all, officers and men, were seized and put in the cutter. That was the 28th April, 1789—near Samoa. On the 28th May that same 19 heard at night a noise of breakers. It was the Barrier Reef of Australia. Bligh might have turned south for Sydney village on the coast, near where Cook first landed. The first fleet must have arrived there since Bligh had sailed. But he could not have been sure it was there. He turned inside the Reef, round Cape York, across the Gulf, and crept into Timor harbour on June 14. Six weeks for 3000 miles through unknown seas and lands in an overcrowded, open boat—no one denies Bligh was a skilful, brave sailor.

Far away back, Bligh's old warship was sailing to Tahiti. From there nine of them with twelve Tahiti women and seven Tahiti servantmen, wandered around the ocean, and at last settled for a home on Pitcairn Island, on the very edge of the world. Some people had lived there long ago for there were great stone works on the place. Its new people burned their boat. For a start, M'Coy and Quintal learned how to brew rum from roots, and drank too much of it. Christian took a Tahiti man's wife, and was shot —eleven months after landing. Murder followed murder. Young, a midshipman, died. At last only one man, Adams, eight or nine women, and a few children of the other men were left. From them, by intermarriage, are descended almost all the 850 people of Norfolk Island. The Colonial Office has always looked on them as an experiment.

The Bounty disappeared in 1791. In 1814 two English warships put in to what was thought an unknown desert island. A dark, naked man came alongside. He shouted. What he said was: "Won't you throw us a rope now?" It was pure English. They had hit on the children of the Bounty people—46 of them, very piously reared by old Adams as a sort of foster-father. There were 27 in 1790; 25 in 1800 (1 man, 5 women, 19 children); 35 in 1804; 40 in 1814; 87 in 1830; in 1856 nearly 200, far too

many for Pitcairn. As the convicts were just leaving Norfolk Island, the Government shipped all the Pitcairners 2000 miles and let them have those deserted, jaundiced, great houses on the beach for their own. Those houses are not the very oldest. A few heaps of grey stones on the hills are all that remain of the first fleet. The others are of Captain Frere's time, but as hoary as the wynds of Edinburgh — quaint, cumbrous, lichen-covered. Into them went the Pitcairners. They have still with them one rusty gun, and one rusty kettle from the Bounty; and her coffee, which grows over the island.

It is not 120 years since the mutiny. Yet there are 850 persons on Norfolk Island. It is an extraordinary race this—slight, dark, rather handsome; speaking a very exceptionally pure English, and a weird, shrill patois besides; nearly the whole race descended from six British sailors, and very proud of it; mostly owning about half-a-dozen of the old names, the Adams, Youngs, Christians, Quintals; with a great friendship for the Navy, which the men of the Navy pay back. The whole island was down at the landing to meet the ship and Mr. Quintal. They vanished from a Government House garden party the other day because someone cried, "Sail ho!" They are a sea race if ever there was one, as used to it as the porpoises. The "Iris"—the big grey yacht of a cable-ship that often lies in Neutral Bay, carries a whole crew of them.

As for their swimming, old Mr. Cornelius Quintal tells a story, which is also in the books. "Soon after we came here," he says, "a mother whale turned some of us out of our whaleboat, four miles out from the shore. One man was hurt; another, an old English sailor, could not swim; I was a young boy. But we swam, taking turns to hold up the old sailor. After a time something brushed along my chest. I looked down, and saw a school of sharks. We were very tired. But our people were looking for us, and near in shore they picked us up."

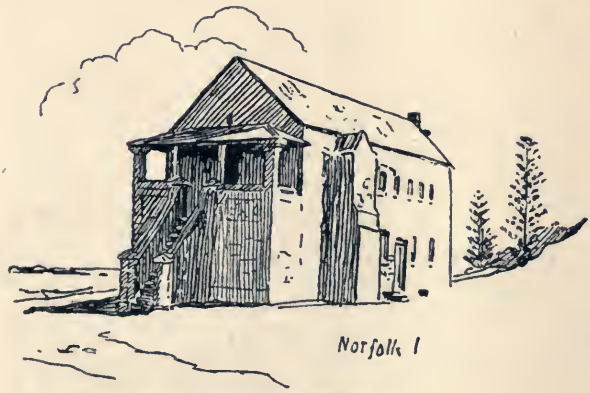
. . . With a great friendship for the Navy, which the men of the Navy pay back. . . .

(The persons on shore are all Norfolk Islanders. The whole island seemed to be down to meet Mr. Quintal. The trees in the background are all Norfolk Island pines.)

"But why did not the sharks touch you?" asked the wardroom.

The old man laughed. "Tell me why the lions did not touch Daniel," he said.

And there you have in a nutshell the whole spirit of the Norfolk Islanders.



. . *Hoary, cumbrous, lichen covered.* .

. . *No sea so wild but he will ride through it.* . .

Chapter IV.

THE SHIP'S HEART.

Suva, July 22.

People are always wondering at it, but it's not in the least wonderful, really, that we call a ship "she." The only other thing we could call her is "he," and she is too pretty for that. "It" is out of the question, simply because there is not one of us that thinks of a ship—whether dozing in harbour or shuddering with speed, or worming over a sleepy swell, or feeling her way through fog, and tooting to other ships somewhere behind the blind white wall of it—as a dead thing. We may find some day, when men build a ship or any other machine, the thing that they put together is really not a dead thing, but living.

Rudyard Kipling says it is the liner that is a lady; and the man-of-war is her husband. So ships may differ as to sex. And of course they do differ minutely in character. For some reason or another, now that one knows a little of the Powerful inside and out in rough weather and calm, one has to come to think of her as a "him"—a great grey warhorse,

A great grey warhorse . . .

brave and big and fast, and full of the gentleness of all big things. He can race still, though perhaps not so swift nor so strong as once he could. The wild rush of science, with its newer ships and newer ways, has swept past him. There was a day—only twelve years since—when he and his great twin brother were the talk of the world. Their speed—more than 22 knots—was unheard of; and their great size and length unknown amongst warships. Their Belleville boilers, in which the water runs in tubes through the fire, instead of the fire running in tubes through the water, had never been tried on anything bigger than a gunboat. When the two big brothers started from the Irish coast on their first manœuvres, to search in one sweeping curve for a vanished fleet, it was by way of finding out what two such great warhorses could do. He has been an aristocrat from the first, this warhorse—an admiral's ship in every ocean. And though he has the kind, sweet manners of a great gentleman, whom the years perhaps have a little softened, there is no sea so wild and black and mountainous but he will ride through it, proud, swift, straighter than most, with the Admiral's flag in ribbons at the truck, and the smoke whisked from his funnels. I doubt not, the bigger and blacker the sea, the more proudly he will shake it from him—this way and that, like a white mane, from his proud old neck.

He is in grand fettle at present—the result of a particularly intelligent and untiring grooming. One saw him in Sydney fuming, fretting at the bit, eager to get off. But he settled down to his pace from the very start, and ran so smooth and yet so constant and strong that he must needs be reined in the day before his journey's end. Just now he is being patted as he lies panting inside the coral breakwater at Suva.

What makes the ordinary four-legged warhorse run so steady and smooth you cannot get inside to see. But on the Powerful you can. Suppose you do. Suppose you crawl the wrong way round through an oily steel grating down an oily ladder with an

agonised oily feed pump groaning in the small of your back; thirty or forty tons of smooth, oily steel pounding like a caged bear around a harmless circle of its own, just outside your left ear; half-a-dozen huge, oily steel arms and elbows punching sideways or longways or crossways or any original or contrary ways within a few feet of your face, and some angry little valves, opened by a rod the size of a knitting needle, jigging and spitting above your head. Goodness knows were the ship is steaming — that has nothing to do with you. She may be high up on the blue seas, or she may be plunging into a storm cloud, or she may be swinging around the corner of a strange land between little sandy palm islands with strange low huts on them, and long, thin wooden things—perhaps canoes—on the beach. There is a tube in the steel wall behind you, and someone at the other end of it, someone high up on the bridge there, someone in white out in the sun, with a twinkling brass rail in front of him, is bothering about all these things which he can see; perhaps chiefly about certain coral which he cannot see. But that is not to worry you. Your duty is to look to it that an oily steel thigh-bone should continue to pound up and down. It must pound up and down, because someone on the bridge six days ago and 1700 miles away wanted it to pound up and down; and it will pound up and down until he wishes it to do something else. That is your business, and that is all of it. You may leave the tropical beauties to the man up in the sunlight; that oily, waving, grey thing is enough for you.

I don't mind owning that there is an air of expectancy in that workshop just at present. People do not live and sleep down there all their time. They know that the end of six days' pounding is pretty well due. One or two fairly responsible persons tend to concentrate to the very middle of the hubbub, where there is a sort of a clock with words on its face above, and the steering wheel of a motor-car, or something to that effect, beneath. Someone feels a huge revolving paw to see it is not too hot—as some-

body else has done every minute or two, night and day. A speck of light, the colour of muddy beer, comes and goes on a scrap of oily wool. Each second that irresistible revolving paw wipes the nose of it—just that and no more—as lightly as you would stroke a kitten. Dreamily round, dreamily round—everything waves dreamily round, 64 times in each minute, 3840 times every hour, 92,160 times every ——. Ding-ding, ding-ding-ding, ding, ding, thirty times ding. Wheels, paws, elbows, thigh-bones are going slower, slower, and steady. Someone steered that motor-car wheel just an inch or two—you caught it from the corner of your eye—and 25,000 horse-power—eight huge thigh-bones bigger than your body, with various arms, legs, and fingers of steel not worth mentioning—are waving once every two seconds instead of twice. The scenery must be getting interesting up there in the sunlight. Probably we are wandering almost under the shade of steep green hills with sand and crashing breakers and strange lighthouses just behind us, white roofs of a town, and a few feathery palms across the . . . . Ding-ding! slow, slower, slow-er, s-t-o-pped. Someone turned that wheel again. She must be further in than we thought, winding right in amongst the anchored ships, running down to her berth. Wonder what she looks like to them, sailing in like a great grey bird of the sea. She is just dragging her screw behind her, breathlessly still; but her way will carry her a quarter of a mile without. . . . Ding, ding, ding. There's a finger on the clock pointing to "Full astern." A grey steel link is sliding dreamily forward. Ever—so—lazily—the—thigh-bones—big—and—little begin to turn. The ship shakes her stern, and grinds like a carriage over stones. You know that the anchor must be over the side, and we are tugging back on it, like a horse on a halter. Ding, ding, ding. The thigh-bones make one last slow journey between their flat steel guides, and the whole maze of machinery drops into its respective chairs and sighs. "Finished," says a low voice alongside. That is one of the men who has been doing it.

Finished—so it may be finished for us, 1743 miles of it. Up in the sun on deck they have arrived there —whatever "there" is like. Down in the engines they have only just begun. Wheels have only to be oiled at sea; in harbour they must be taken out, cleaned, mended, and put back. You probably imagine one engine. There are 93 of them in this ship, 93 separate and wholly distinct sets of machinery. Each has to be separately watched and fed and nursed and put to sleep. Each has its separate use and its separate voice, and they all talk at once. In your ignorance you think it a babel; but the men down there know when each one is calling, and what he is calling for. The little folk, the small fry of the engine-room, generally squeak if they are hurt. "When they go like that," said one of their masters, tenderly slapping a small refrigerator which was coughing distressingly, "when they go like that, it generally means that they're chawing themselves up inside."

"What happens when the big engines squeak?" I asked.

"Well, the worst of them is, they don't. They've a way of just silently melting and curling up. The white metal quietly heats and drips out of them without saying a word. Things must have gone pretty far if they have started to squeak."

So they go the round of these hippopotami, for all the world like nurses, taking their temperature every few minutes. Their collars are made loose or else they are apt to become apoplectic from the heat. That portentous thump which is the heart of a steamer is caused by the neck working in this looseness. In my innocence I asked if they left it about an eighth of an inch loose. They did not. They measured it to thirteen-thousandths of an inch, and left that. If that is not enough and the patient goes lead-coloured and steams all over, they call up the doctor. He can do little more than drench it with oil to cool it. The one thing he cannot do is to stop

the ship. That is the extreme measure, though it seems worth taking at times. There were once two battleships racing in the Mediterranean. Number one was running in, when something became obviously wrong with a crosshead—which is engine-room for a giant's knee-joint. It turned black and then red and then white, and filled the engine-room with a faint smell of burnt oil. But number two was not far enough behind to be held beaten; so the staff turned its blind eye to that particular part of the engine-room and sailed on. Number one steamed in a beautiful first, and as soon as the crosshead pin was cool enough to approach it was examined. It was found split in half obliquely. Now if the crosshead pin had worked out, the connecting rod would have swung round the shaft like a catherine-wheel until it was tangled up with enough of the engine-room to choke its way. And the piston would have shot through the top of the cylinder and the decks above and like a rocket out to sea. Those are the only two things that are certain. The rest is a matter of conjecture.

Another thing that may happen at sea is that the shaft may break obliquely: one piece will stop and the other go on, around it, five times as hard as before. Whether it ploughs through the double bottom depends on whether it is loosened or bent back far enough. Another thing that may happen at sea is that the water may get low in the boilers, and the tubes curl up and burst, and drive white-hot ashes and steam over three stokers or more. Another thing that may happen at sea . . . . .

If anything happens on a passenger liner, it happens two days out of a big seaport. But in a flagship it is just as likely to happen at Tongataboo as anywhere else. If the Powerful were just the sort of big steamer with guns on board that most of us imagine, she would spend most of her time making week-end trips to Mort's Dock. As a matter of fact, she is a Civil Service store and a Lithgow ironworks and Newcastle coal mine combined; not to speak of

the boiler-fitting, joining, carpentering, brass-working, and tailoring, and a soda-water factory which paid for itself, and a dividend besides, in its first nine months. Within a single half-hour I saw great nests of boiler tubes slung out, and new tubes being fitted into them; molten brass being run into moulds; cold brass being bored and turned; boats being planked; boiler casings being renewed; rakes being straightened. It was all done—the great iron plates for the casings had been cut and bored and punched—in an empty stokehold turned for the time into an ironworks. And all in the day's work.

To do this work, the Navy gets men, skilled men, who worked for themselves in the towns before, to carry on their trade in the ships, and calls them engine-room artificers. The result is that if the Powerful were wrecked on a desert island to-morrow, it would be the best thing that could have ever happened to the desert island. The next ship to sail in would probably sight a factory chimney or two, and find the Powerful melted down into a railway, with a cold storage, a ferry service, and a North Shore bridge complete; not to mention a police force, a William Whiteley's, and a sanitary system; and, above all, a population that thinks nothing impossible for the good reason that it can do anything.

It really seems that it can. Consider this:

There was a ship once, an ancient, decrepit river gunboat with one ricketty stern wheel, that was sent up an African river to save a wrecked party from the enemy. When she did her very best she could struggle two knots against the stream. There were some forts to pass. She kept down their fire for a time by blazing right into the embrasures, until she came to a position where her guns could not bear. Then the enemy shot through her boiler, and she gave out.

But the moment she began to lose way she dropped anchor, and there hung on for dear life, right opposite the fort. The commander and the men on deck fought with their rifles. And the engineer below set out to

cut an iron plate to mend the boiler with. The engineer did it himself, because all the engine-room hands were scalded. He cut the iron plate, and bored holes in it to fit nuts and screws. For 13 hours the enemy fired heavily, and then for 10 hours there was night. By the end of 23 hours the plate was cut, bored, fixed, bolted, the engineer reported the work finished, and they sailed away. That was when Lord Charles Beresford in the Safieh saved Sir Charles Wilson on the Nile. Everyone has heard, deservedly indeed, of Lord Charles Beresford; but not of Engineer Benbow.

We talk very glibly of ships being built of so many horse-power, and so many knots, as if someone had merely to turn a handle, and the engines did the rest. All that the builder does is to make a ship which is able to be driven so fast. Whether she ever is driven so fast depends on the men who drive her. There are nations that can never get anything like full speed out of their ships. Young, new stokers cannot often do it in any navy. Shovelling, raking, sweating four hours at a time, they will barely keep steam up. After a few months of hard work has brought up their muscle, and they are learning where to shovel and how to shovel, they can do twice the work with half the labour. One had thought of a stoker as piling on all the coal he could shovel at his own sweet will. In reality the turn of his particular stokehold comes only every seven minutes or so. Far up in the engine-room someone presses a knob—rings a gong. Somewhere down near the keel a man in a grimy woollen vest shovels open a furnace door, shovels four spadefuls of coal blinking into the fierce light; clamps shut the door again. Opens another caged hell, and another, and another, feeds, and closes the four, four spoonfuls to each; wipes his brown, shining arms and neck, and waits quietly back in the dark for the next signal. He has fed two boilers, and that gong is going the round of the others. There are 48 boilers in all. The faster the ship goes, the more she uses. She has worked only 18 this trip.

Yet it is not down there in the heat, noise, sweat of it, that you realise the awful power driving the ship; not until you look in the cool outer air on the impassive result. Last night a fresh breeze and the whisk of water outside not so far beneath the open port—the bunk was beneath it inside—brought to mind that a wave-top had found its way into the cabin next door on this same trip last year. A cold compress at 2 a.m. is not comforting. It seemed practical to find how near those spiteful hisses came.

So I looked out. It was cloudy, wild. The water seethed alongside, whispering like wind in gum-leaves. Spray hissed and hissed again, savage as driven rain. It was not that which held one there. As a matter of fact, the waves never came within six feet of the porthole. But down there below them, now near to the surface, now blurred in the depths, was a whirling spiral of green-blue light. Waves might seethe at will, shoulder us, heave us, drop us again. But that light was constant. It was one of the huge propellers driving the ship.

Somewhere, one knew, somewhere deep in the dim hull, were men busy in a soft haze of engine-room lights. Somewhere deeper still, right on the ship's bottom, there was a deafening scraping of coal on iron floors, the occasional glare of an open fire-box. Somewhere along a dark passage was the shaft always giddily turning against the insignificant collars that take the whole thrust of the screw. One knew the ship's secret—the enormous, anxious strain to keep that same propeller turning. And here was one fine result of it all, grinding away impassively as though it did not know how to stop; utterly reckless of the wallowing furrows. It would churn away so all night—all through a week of nights—slashing the phosphorous into flashes. From the port could be heard not a sound nor a creak in the ship, save one. Like the drone of bass under light music of wave-tops, felt more than heard, was one grim, constant grinding. Clouds, wind, sea may have imagined that paddling effortless. But we—we were in the secret.

From the land, ships seem to swim as effortless as melted butter down a plate. But there is one sign of that sternness. From South Head when the steamers pass hundreds of feet beneath and a mile away, you can catch the fuss of them through the water—a rustle as when a lady gathers her skirts and runs upstairs; a shallow plash like the pouring of water in a bath; a relentless ripping of the surface like paper continuously torn. It is the fight of ship and sea.

It is a hot, sweet, oily air that puffs along the narrow alleys there by the keel. They sweat in 110 and 120 and 130 degrees in the tropics, dropping like flies as often as not. "But we can take a bit o' that thrown in," said one of them. "We know when our work is done, and that's more than most. I tell you, the marines often turn over to stokers when they know what it's like."

They work shorter time in the tropics. One cannot help thinking of a day when there will be no half-time; when the big grey ventilation cowls that send cool air down below will be shot away, and their gratings choked with scraps of torn iron; when the ship up above them will stumble and stagger now and then; with strange crashings overhead, and a thin smell of burning wood and powder and oil filtering down below; when there will be mysterious disturbances in the bunkers above (she carries 24 feet of coal instead of an armoured wall along each side), and ghostly knockings on the armoured deck; when they realise that—heaven knows why—the floor has listed, and the ship balances curiously. It is no business of theirs. They have to see that their oily thigh-bone revolves 84 times to the minute, and keeps cool. If ever it does come to a certain signal, each man has his way out—some tube or funnel or stairway, with the sunlight at the other end. It may be a mass of scrap-iron by then. He can just wait for that signal and invent another way. A man on the Victoria when she sank one calm blue morning in the Mediterranean was washed by the rush of the water

up a ventilation cowl clear of the ship. As for the rest—the last officer who looked down into the dark engine-room before the seamen were given the word to jump could see the men there, each quietly standing at his post amongst his bars and tubes and thigh-bones.

Just think of that for a minute as you squirm up the narrow steel ladder, and the starboard feed-pump gives you its last friendly pat on the back. And you will bring out with you into the light for those whose life is in that darkness a feeling that is not unlike reverence.

* * * * *

That is where two of us have just come from. We went down there when the ship was tossing in a free seaway. We sat chatting, chatting, chatting, in a dim corner, and watched the huge steel limbs to sleep. It was dazzling, at first, out in the sunlight. But there is H.M.S. Cambrian alongside of us; the cableship Iris across a distant pier-head; an A.U.S.N. boat in the stream—Sydney's sugar and banana ship, the Suva. A half-moon of grey, saw-toothed mountains stretched behind, one standing out like a thumb-nail. A sheltering muddy line across the sea—it is coral—outside of us; a sloping point in shore; red roofs in the trees, like Sydney, but five times as green; a flagstaff, a few white specks along the beach; a steamy grey satin sea; a dazzling tropical morning just turning to a thundery tropical afternoon.

A ramshackle motor with a nervous cough and a freight of mop-haired, chocolate-skinned men, laughing and interested, ducks under the stern. Out in the sunlight we are in Suva.

Chapter V.

THE SEA LIFE.

It is six days since we left Sydney, and one has had time to digest a first impression. It is probably the first impression of every landsman whose great fortune it is to travel on a warship.

On a liner every passenger finds the voyage something of a sensation. He is up and down the deck all day watching mollyhawks wheel about the tumbling wake; blinking across the glare of that restless surface at flying fish, or porpoises, or sunsets, or passing tramps. Even the man who tells you with a yawn that he has been that way eighteen times, Sir, there and back—even he is as excited as the rest at the prospect of airing his knowledge. That yawn was a fine piece of art, and he enjoyed it every bit as much as you enjoyed your porpoises. A passenger ship is something of a sensation, even to the oldest liar that ever astonished the smoking-room.

But this ship is different. To the 850 men who sail by her she is a home, in port and out; and they live not on her but in her. The Powerful is furnished as a home, a comfortable home—probably the most comfortable home on all the seas. And when men are not about their work they live, forward and aft, in much the same sort of home that each would live in if he were ashore. A comfortable clubroom with its papers and magazines, its lounges and its library, where the news of the world is posted up, as the wireless telegraph receives it, just as it would be in a London club, for the officers; the cleanest of clean quarters, with rows of spotless mess tables—which for some reason reminded one of the shearers' hut on a well-kept western run, for the men.

People have an idea that the officer in the Navy is always sick of the sea, and hankering after a snug billet ashore. It may be so with merchant captains. But the naval officer sees more time ashore and generally more comfort at sea. Not always. In this ship, for instance, the gun-room (which is not a room with guns in it, but a sort of narrow dining-room for the midshipmen and junior officers), is on the lower-deck, so near sea-water that its ports cannot be open at sea. There are no midshipmen there now because the Admiralty thinks good to keep its youngsters with their noses to the grindstone in a rather sterner school than the Australian harbours. But in other commissions they had to sail to Fiji or Singapore, with a tropical sun outside, with the deck above, and not a single breath of air beneath; with every port fast bottled, and something like a heat fog through the whole flat. In this weltered the midshipmen, the sub-lieutenants, the junior engineers and clerks—slept, eat, stewed, or were schooled between whiles. At one time the youngsters were gulled in their business arrangements, and a big sum subscribed for their feeding disappeared. As most of the rest was invested in a piano, the gun-room lived for a month on bread, butter, and weak tea. There were sardines occasionally, when an extravagant fit took the mess, and even cold mutton. There's a diet, for the King's officers, if you please. But the cabins are snug, and the hours—breakfast at 8, lunch at 12, tea at 3.30—comfortable. As for dinner at 7, never was a more delightful, sociable table. Never were such silent, swift, attentive waiters, with their neat white jackets and white cotton gloves. The band—every flagship and battleship has one—plays you in night after night with "The Roast Beef of Old England."

Sitting there in a room bright with 30 odd mess jackets, the talk playing up and down the table in gusts, and Braga's "Serenata" or the "Jewel Song" or the "Merry Widow" filtering down through the skylight, there comes a hush. The last course has

been cleared; the wine has gone round. Then the Mess President at the top of the table calls: "Mr. Vice, the King!" The band strikes those chords which mean more to Englishmen even than the health of His Majesty. As it finishes, Mr. Vice gives: "The King, God bless him!"

There are plenty of us nowadays with nothing but a sneer for loyalty. When that silence fell, just for the moment, a curtain was raised, and one realised in a flash what very shallow thinkers we are. Here in this wonderful service are men—not this present thirty odd, but thousands upon thousands—all living by one simple, quiet, unswerving faith. Every one, from the time he was a little boy has held it without questioning that loyalty to his King and his country, and the wonderful ideals that King and country really stand for, is a thousand times more important than such a trifle as his own life. They say it is a lesson in patriotism to hear a Jap say "*my* country." The toast of the King on the King's ships can be a lesson, too. You do not so often see into the inner places of an Englishman's heart; but you know them all the more sacred when you do. I remember once, long since, having stood behind a naval officer during the simple church service on a certain quarterdeck. The band was playing "God Save the King," with which every service finishes. At the first chord the back of the blue frock coat in front straightened, the chest was flung out, the chin up, heels together. He stood like a statue till the last word was sung. It was all perfectly unconscious, a quite involuntary symptom of an immense, overpowering loyalty. Ninety-nine out of a hundred men at the Trades Hall would laugh at him for that sentiment. They would go further—they would honestly despise him for it. Now one does not in any way underrate the demagogue. There is a sturdy, democratic manliness about the Trades Hall man, and he thoroughly believes himself invicible. But one can't help thinking he miserably under-estimates the power of that loyalty. It is not an abstract idea. It is a conviction which

has become character. If ever it came to a fight, the Trades Hall man would see some power he could not understand carrying that man through and over everything—over things far worse than death; he might put him through flame, thirst, starvation; through torture, through nerve-shattering times and awful, ghastly wounds, and find him still persisting. That loyalty would make him the most terrible enemy—the enemy that nothing can stop whilst he lives; and it would carry him on and over one who lacked it. At least, that was the glimpse one thought to catch under that raised curtain.

You may drink that toast in wine; or, in these late years, you may drink it in nothing at all and drink it all the same. A good half of the glasses, in many ships of the Navy, have no wine in them at dinner even for this toast. The old idea that naval officers drank hard and lived harder is hopelessly astray. Perhaps it was so once. But in no warship that the writer has ever stepped on has the drinking been as hard, or the conversation within many degrees as shady as in the ordinary city office or club. Of course, on small ships, in some of those backwaters of the world whither the Admiralty sometimes sends them, you may come across lonely men who have ruined themselves by pegging. But the young British officer on the big ships lives a life straighter, simpler, cleaner than many a city man could understand, much less emulate.

On Saturday night we drank another toast which is drunk every Saturday night at sea. It is the prettiest toast in the world.

"Mr. Vice," says the President, "Sweethearts and Wives."

"Gentlemen," echoes Mr. Vice, "may your sweethearts become your wives, and may your wives ever remain your sweethearts."

There is a story of an incautious major caught muttering "and may they never meet."

Speaking of old customs, these ships are crammed

with them. Every man coming aboard a ship salutes the quarterdeck; that is, the stern of the ship. You may see strings of sailors running up the ladder on to the poop. The hand of each flies to his forehead. On those little, high-sterned, walnut-shells of things that were the great ships when America was discovered, there was always a shrine somewhere on the towering wooden stern; where the heavy street lanterns burned dimly o' nights, and a sentry with a pike and an iron cap walked up and down under heavy mouldings and oaken rails. A wooden Virgin and child, or a crucifix, looked down upon the ship from there. And the poop became, what it still is, the sacred quarter of the ship. How many people know that story? or the tale of how the uniform the British Navy wears was chosen for it by George II. because he thought the Duchess of Bedford looked so well in a riding habit of blue and white?

It is a custom in the Army not to talk shop at mess. We may thank our stars it is not a custom in the Navy. It would be a bad day that made it so. At present in the Navy you may hear men talking, even at dinner, about the things they understand, things absorbingly interesting; about shells capped with some soft stuff such as wrought iron—wrought iron! —as though it were cotton wool! about sea-telegrams that came clearly in the first hours of the morning when the wireless has been stuttering to itself inarticulately all day; of famous signals by sarcastic admirals in home ports which never found their way into any newspaper yet; of ships in the British Navy; and others.

One cannot live for a week on a British warship without being struck with the immense volume of strange experience in strange lands which she carries about with her. A crew of 900 men is an encyclopædia with 900 pages. In truth, to that most various collection of exciting stories, romance and adventure across five continents and seven seas, on the highways and the byways of the world, and the

blackest, little, unknown, blind alleys which are not ways at all, there is no end. Stories of shooting—of lion-shooting up and down both sides of Africa and across the middle of it, too; of tiger-shooting in China and bear-shooting in America; of hippopotamus, of elephant, of leopard and hyæna; stories of black men and white men; stories of the Germans, French, Italians, Japanese, Americans, and Sikhs from men who saw them side by side in China.

There are adventures with the Town Guard in unknown Turkish seaports. The Navy falls sometimes even on a masquerade. There is a story of how a foreign man-o'-war had frightened the sheikhs in villages along the Persian Gulf. It was thought well that a big English cruiser should demonstrate also. She demonstrated. She called at each sea-side town; invited the sheikh and his chamberlains aboard. As they chatted by the gangway, the guns close behind them were let fly with blank. The Court vanished like rabbits to the bows, and the bow guns were fired. It bolted wildly to the stern, and they loosed the twelve-pounders there. Finally, when it had been sufficiently impressed, the Court was set back on shore, and the cruiser went to the next village and demonstrated there. There are stories of the strange ways ships can behave; of destroyers rolling to 40 and even 50 degrees, when everyone was desperately sick, and most of them tied in their places; of how the Edgar* rolled and rolled and rolled in an Atlantic storm until she rolled a funnel overboard. It is a good thing for some of us that sailors do not take to writing books; for what books they could write!

Those yarns are not hard to follow, though there is a slang of the sea, for'ard and aft, which you must learn. The shore is always "beach"; the faint land on the skyline is "mud" as often as not. Portsmouth is "Pompey"; the ship almost always "this packet"; the seamen are the "matelots," and the marines either

* Sister ship of the Royal Arthur; and of the Gibraltar which was lately in Sydney. Her picture is on page 131.

"jollies" or "jerooks" (save the spelling!). The captain is the "owner" and the "old man," too, unless the Admiral is aboard. But the most delightful of all is to hear the ship's company for'ard playing with the catalogue of His Majesty's Fleet. You might recognise the Old Maggy for H.M.S. Magnificent, and the Sampan for the Sanspareil. But how about Billy Ruffian for Bellerophon? or Pom One for Pomone? or Subtle Jay for Sutlej? or Hermy One for Hermione? or Psitch or Psyck or Pysh or Fish or anything else *ad libitum* for Psyche?

A sailor's is an indoor life in these days. The officer takes his fresh air by a curious unwritten routine, either in little groups chatting round the gangway for the space of one cigarette after each meal; or on the long poop, when it grows dark, in the hour before dressing for dinner. The seniors take the starboard side, the juniors the port. During that hour some of the older men generally pace the deck in twos or threes; a few of the younger ones jump into whites and vault, wrestle, box, trot round the ship, practise one of a dozen recognised ways of keeping a waist and a wind. An executive officer gets four hours of breeze on the bridge, now at dawn, now at noon, now before the light. But an engineer sees next to none of it. Actually, there are men who, when there was work doing far down in the engines, have hardly been seen by the rest for months together. And you can get away with a vengeance in a big ship. It is as mysterious as a half-explored country. Far beneath the guns and the mess decks, beneath the armoured deck and the ammunition alleys and the coal bunkers, when you come alongside of the end of all things, by the keel and the double bottom, there are corners and crevices only half known; packed with half-forgotten stores, brushes, rope, rags—maybe with nothing at all. The foul drainings of the ship, leakage mostly from the engine-room, swills about the rusted frames — places known only to the rats and cockroaches and the ship's cat. But there is some one man in the ship within whose duty each crevice and

cupboard comes. They say that cases are known where these men have disappeared into these depths for months—sleeping there, living there, unknown. How they could do it is a marvel; because there is a custom, relict of the middle ages, by which every man that can be spared has to come up on deck each afternoon to "divisions," merely for the sake of being seen. And any seaman absent should be missed on the instant.

Seamen, too, live mostly in their messes, where plenty of air comes, an intelligent, healthy, barrack life, and a busy one. Down the gangway or up the deck is a clamour of shrill little whistles. Then from some enormous throat something that sounds like anything but is more like "Yai—hai—wai" than anything else. For the life of one, listening with the best intentions in the world, "Ya-i . . . yai-wai-hai" is all that one can detect. But before the last word dies there is a patter of bare feet. A dozen men in white run—British seamen have to carry out orders at a run—round the upper works. And before you realise what they are doing, it is done.

Did one call it a barrack life? That was unjust. It is what a barrack life ought to be. On this ship they are always doing something; learning some corner of their most comprehensive trade. One afternoon, during tea, the ship began to shudder and wriggle violently. Presently the crisp breaking of the lather churned up by the screws sounded through the port-hole. When that lather comes along the ship's side it is clear she is going astern. One had thought the Powerful was going to Norfolk Island. But here, in mid-ocean, at no time in particular, and with land miles out of sight, she was moving the other way. So one went on deck. There, out over the poop, about a quarter of a mile astern, was some object in the water, smoking furiously. The white smoke clouds marked it out clearly from the deep blue surface across which they were blown. Nearer to the ship two heavy lifeboats, for all the world like two stumpy caterpillars, were digging in a hurry over the

way between. The big ship was stopped, heaving lazily and slowly sagging broadside on to the swell. Within twelve minutes the leading boat was back alongside and heaved, men and all, up on to the davits and into the ship. She carried a smoking, evil-smelling lifebuoy in her bow. It had been dropped for practice. Two of them are hung, one out over each side near the stern, with a sentry always by them, day and night. One tug of a wire lets them drop, and fires some stuff which the water will not quench, but which marks the place where they float with its flame at night and its smoke by day. There is a brandy flask tied to them, and they will support four men.

"They want 'em at times, want 'em bad," said a friend of mine for'ard. "But there's times when they ain't no good neither. I remember seein' a fellow down there with eight lifebuoys bobbin' all round 'im. But they done 'im no good, 'cause 'e 'it 'is 'ead on a boat'ook as 'e fell. One man — a Royal Naval Volunteer 'e was — ran down the 'ole ship, jumped clear of the screws, and 'eld 'im up till we got 'im. Another time we come into Plymouth to pay off. There was a man I knew 'ose mother 'ad come down in a boat to see 'im. 'E was standin' by the anchor, and when they let it go 'e was 'ooked in it. 'E didn't 'ave no chanst—much." Indeed, even with the lifebuoys in these seas there are deaths worse than drowning. It is a very rare thing to see sharks on the high seas. But only yesterday afternoon we saw a long, green-grey body, and two ugly, oily fins, circling slowly round a piece of sodden flesh not six paces from the side.

After a quarter of an hour's rest in mid-ocean the flagship went on her way again. Some such interlude as this—"evolutions" they are called—happens every day except on Saturday. Had there been a fleet behind us, the whole fleet would have stopped and raced for the buoys; or there would have been a signal and every boat in the fleet, big and little water-beetles all in a desperate hurry, would have splashed down,

careered wildly all round the ships and home again; or for a treat the men might have bathed close around the ship out in mid-ocean; or some one of a dozen schemes would have been practised—and all to keep the fleet awake and give it the exercise that does not come of itself nowadays.

But quite apart from this fleet work, each man on the ship is learning some part of his trade almost the whole of his time. A good many are actually at school on the ship, in front of a blackboard, licking their pencils, writing notes. You do not think of the young naval officer as a schoolmaster or lecturer, working out formulæ on a blackboard with chalk for the benefit of a class; setting them examination papers, and then sitting down in his cabin to correct them. But that does come all in the day's work. The Navy is trained in exactly the opposite way to the Army. In the Army a man will presumably some day have to fight—that is to say, to go to a far land, bake bread, cook breakfast, boil tea, look after horses, mend boots, find his way across country; and in the intervals lie down behind rocks and shoot. So we teach him to stand up and be shot; and nothing else except to present arms in the morning, and lie on his cot and yawn for sheer boredom all the rest of the day, with the result that he is very brave and very foolish whilst he is in the Army, and utterly useless when he leaves it. Whereas in the Navy they make of the sailor a magnificent handicraftsman at sea; and out and away the handiest citizen ashore. They are only teaching him the branches of his trade after all. Perhaps they will solve half the problems of the War Office when they do the same for Tommy.

. . . *Up in the light we are in Suva.* . . .

Chapter VI.

FIJI AND A FIGHTING PEOPLE.

"Suva has its points," said the officer of the watch cheerfully, as the sky emptied itself like a bucket on the awning above,—"about 40 on an average every day. The other great place is Niagara."

As a matter of fact, we struck Suva in a drought. There had been only three inches of rain in the last month, though there were 60 inches in the three months before that. A couple of years back they had nearly 170 inches of rain in the year. One steamy, grey day there was a strange haze. It was the sort of day when people grow uneasy that something is going to happen, without knowing quite what. At 5 in the afternoon it began to rain, to pour, to welter. The water crept hour by hour up the rain gauges. By 6 next morning it was running over the brim; 30 inches had fallen, and something more, which could not be measured, because the makers of rain gauges do not calculate water by the yard. Stretches of road moved from their places on hilltops, and slipped softly down the valleys. A white magistrate was bringing his wife and child from one of the islands. He was bringing them in an open boat, because that is the way in which Government ordains that its

officers shall travel the Pacific Ocean in these parts. That evening they ran into a sheer wall of rain, through which Suva Harbour did not appear. The boat was turned, but she grated on coral, and was swamped. The magistrate and his wife managed to wade ashore. Their child was drowned.

There are times here when the glass falls below 29, and a great wind comes rushing into the bay. The sea begins to ruffle, and then to boil. As for the steamers in Suva, where they are tucked safely behind the barb of a sort of fish-hook of coral, the great waves cannot reach them. When the hurricane comes they steam slowly up to their anchor chains, head on into the black wind, like fish, just keeping place against the stream. But in the small island of Ovalau the harbour of Levuka, the old capital, turns its mouth straight to the sea. There is nearly always a ship there waiting for copra. Every time her crew waste their lives trying to save her. Every time, as the waves grow fiercer, they let go every anchor. By the time it is done it is too late to leave. Every time they trust she will ride it out, and every time she fails. Why do they fool their lives away in a hopeless fight to save a ship whose owners are nothing to them? Why are sailormen sailormen?

It was in the teeth of a gale like this the Calliope steamed out of Samoa. I have only met one man that went through such a storm safely. He was in a gunboat on the China station. A typhoon caught them one afternoon in a certain harbour. All that night they steamed slowly into it, just keeping the strain off their anchor chains. The storm was so thick that they could barely look into it. The gale was such as they had never seen. The water was hardly in waves at all, but rather one foaming, boiling, seething surface, scudding and swirling past them, barely visible in the blackness. Once or twice in the night a junk was swept by; a French ship sat on their stem. When the grey of morning came there were ships smashed on the beach about them, and not a junk had lived through it.

One did not hear in Fiji of any Government boats caught out in such weather. But there have been close shaves. The Chief of Police told me how he had been sailing to another island, when the glass dropped and the wind came on. The open boat began to lap up wave-tops green. One of the Fijians was kept hard at work with a bucket, and the water did not gain. But there is a limit to Fijian pluck, and things became so bad that the man threw down his bailer and lay on the bottom. He said he could not bail any longer. There was nothing for it but to unship the tiller and threaten to brain him if he did not get up. Luckily he did, and before the real hurricane came along the boat was in.

So the rain is not always as welcome in Fiji as in Australia. But, taken along with a few other things, it has made life very simple for the Fijian. He has only had to open his mouth, shut his eyes, and see what nature gave him. A few million years ago, more or less, some giant force was playing with the world. The world would not stand it; developed in weak parts various semi-circular cracks — always perfect curves—like a broken tennis ball. Through one of these, in the Pacific floor, not so far from the northern toe of New Zealand, there oozed up the hot contents of the earth, making 200 islands, big and small, and very exceedingly rich. The 180th meridian, exactly the opposite side of the world to Greenwich Observatory, on the Thames, may not have existed just then. But that is precisely where this bunch of islands was. There is one mountain (not over 100 miles from here) on which you may stand, with one leg in Wednesday and the other in Thursday, and move back or forwards 24 hours in one step. The biggest of these islands white men used to call Feegee. Now they call it Fiji. Perhaps some day they will call it Viti, which is its proper name.

The sea floor seems to have helped these mountain islands by buckling a little and raising the ocean mud above the surface, where it became a soft slate. In Suva itself there are only a few inches of soil

above that soap-stone. But as those inches are the colour of the cut trunk of a tree-fern, or black gingerbread, or rich plum-cake, the island, valley and hillside, is covered with such masses of green as seem to have been shovelled on with a pitchfork. Fat, succulent grass, rare hothouse shrubs, with red and yellow leaves, orchids, hibiscus, in a dozen colours, lantana—which, if it is a curse, at least blends the delicate, exquisite faint pinks and whites and reds and yellows in all nature's paint-box—lemons, bread fruit, acacias, trees with dark leaves and light leaves, delicate leaves and great, coarse, rank leaves as fat as your hand and six times the size of it—they cover every square inch of the land. As though this were not enough, the creepers for whom no space is left must pile themselves over the tree-tops. There you may see them, miles down the valley below you, looking as soft as cotton-wool if you choose to jump. Across the valley over the hills, tier after tier, as flat under the grey shadows as stage scenery or cut cardboard, are the ranges of the island. At your feet, hundreds of yards below, tunnelling in and out of the masses of poisonous tropical green and dense rich shade, winds one of the brimming rivers in which all that rain-water wanders to sea. And what a sea it is, that wine-dark Pacific. Out beyond all it lies, in a wide frame made by the long hill slopes, over the distant lawns of the cane-fields, over the edge of the forest, an outstanding palm-tree fluttering here and there against it like a turkey's tail blown on itself by the wind—a long thin stretch of that most perfect blue which one finds in Lord Leighton's backgrounds. On a fresh day the wind may bring you a sound like the distant murmur of a train. Far out across that blue runs a thin-shaded line of green and yellow against which the sea ever and anon bares its dazzling white teeth. That smile comes and goes in a slender white string, as straight as a thread of cotton held lightly, but broken and chasing its broken ends like a salamander in the fire. It is the long Pacific swell breaking over the coral that is building

there, building incessantly, year in and year out, up to the level of the surface. However it storms without, it is calm as the sky within. They say that opposite river mouths, in the fresh water, coral cannot live. So an opening is left which leads through to such harbours as Suva.

Now what could the Fijian do when he came to a land like that? It would be absurd to plant food, because nature did the job so much more artistically. There were no animals to keep unless they had tried to tame the mice or flying-foxes or birds, or land crabs; and these are mostly gone. The mice have been eaten off by the white man's rat, which became such a plague that the mongoose was shipped in to eat him. There must have been a mistake somewhere, for the mongoose lives quite happily with rats; and kills off native birds, chickens, ducks, hens instead. When they become too scarce he eats the crabs—little yellow fellows that squat in thousands like crocuses on the mud by the sea. They have only one great claw; and, if you come by, fold up like pocket kodaks, slip sideways down the mouths of their small mud volcanoes, and wave that one protesting, querulous arm dismally up at you.

The natives could not well keep crabs. The only thing left was to fight. So they fought; and for the rest lived like gentlemen, in neat haystacks of houses, all set neatly on a green lawn, with the forest and breadfruit and yams hemming it in—as well found as the Swiss Family Robinson; with the result that the lazy blue smoke, fresher and sweeter than incense, which curls up from these forest patches at nightfall, is not half as lazy as the men that sit round the fire beneath. They grew useless to work; but they did grow useful to fight. It is the way of the human race to turn into a very perfect instrument for doing whatever happens to be the rage with it. We have been turning ourselves for a couple of centuries into the most wonderful engines for inventing flying machines; because flying machines are the rage with

us. We have a portentous scorn for our benighted ancestors. But we forget that they did not want to fly. They wanted to fight, and the thing that they produced, body and brain, was as wonderful a machine for fighting as Edison is for flying. It was the feudal aristocracy—the dukes, counts, and barons of Europe.

Some few generations, which spoke, thought, dreamed nothing but fighting, and attended strictly to the business, have made of the Zulu the most perfect body of a man that exists. They have done nearly as well for the Maori, the Tongan, and the Fijian. Great shoulders and chest, arms and legs not too heavy and not too light, but as perfect as Myron's "Discthrower"; no bulging thighs, but a waist as neat and hips as slight as an Englishman's; hair combed out until it stands like Struwel-Peter's in the nursery rhyme, and bleached with lime to the colour of a door-mat; the face of a child and the bearing of an aristocrat—the Fijian is quite the best argument for Mr. Deakin's compulsory service scheme. Not even modern clothes can quite disguise his beauty; or rather they could, but he does not wear trousers. He wears a sack coat and a white kilt, and leaves his graceful calves and ankles bare. Some day, when men will do nothing but laugh at our extraordinary leg casings, they will own that the sack suit, in spite of its dreary colours, was made quite an ornament in Fiji.

The Fijian fought his last fight years ago. Some way over the horizon from the furthermost of his islands is another fault in the sea-bottom; another set of mountain-tops; another race living on them, more like Maoris; whose calves are even more beautiful and hair even longer than with the Fijian. Captain Cook anchored there three months, and they made themselves so pleasant that he called them the Friendly Islands. As a matter of fact, they had arranged to eat Cook and both his crews, only that one of the chiefs made a stupid slip in the arrangements, and it did not come off.

It so happens that a trade wind blows from the Friendly Islands to Fiji. Even now, when it blows over hard, it sometimes brings with it a boat or canoe. A few years since it brought a barque, and piled her on Fiji coral. That is probably how, long ago, some war canoe of the Friendly Islanders, better known as Tongans, found the Fiji mountain-tops. They did not let it rest at that. They sailed down, raiding, killing, from time to time—almost wiped the Fijians out of the nearest islands. And as if that was not enough, 104 years ago some convicts escaped there from New South Wales. They became leaders of the natives, because of the power their firearms gave to wipe off old scores against other tribes. They led tribes rampaging round the islands. Their grandchildren are amongst the half-castes to this day. Then came the Wesleyans; afterwards Roman Catholics; lastly the British Government; and these things were changed. Cakabau (who is pronounced Thakambau), the leading chief, finding that he really had no kingdom left to give, gave it to the British in 1874.

There ended the wars, and the Fijian — cannibal a few years back—has turned into the most sweetly law-abiding of citizens. But a year or two of civilisation cannot wrench war out of his body or his spirit. An order to dig or to cut cane he will only obey as he pleases. But they say that when he enlists in the police he jumps to obedience from the first. Apparently, too, he will still obey the leaders of his own race. A prince was present at a native ceremony in Suva. "Do you see that man?" said one who ought to know. "If he were to say here to these people, 'Crawl out, you dogs; crawl out of here on your stomachs,' they would not think of disobeying."

The Fijian learns the whole of his police drill in a fortnight. But the most extraordinary instance of his power to learn drill is the "meke." Most of us watch a meke under the impression that it is a war dance, and wonder what long-forgotten cannibal ecstasy must be revolving in the back of these wild men's brains as they swing their clubs and make the

ground tremble with their tread. All the time it is only a ballet. They are singing of the stying of pigs, the arrival of the mail-boat, the King's Coronation; even of the barrister who did not persuade the Judge to set them free, though they bought him for £100. It is topical song and ballad combined. One man invents words and movements too. He goes through both before the people of his district. Within a fortnight they have it more perfectly than any musical ride by the Horse Guards. It has to be perfect, for there are a hundred or two of great wooden hockey sticks or clubs whirling like catherine-wheels in close order; and if anybody's head is out of place it is likely to stop one.

There was no time to compose a special meke for the Powerful, and the one about the Union Company's steamers would not quite fit—they had red funnels. Others were chosen, about the Russian-Japanese war; "The Russian manuwa (which is Fijian for man-o'-war) came sailing on the sea; the Japanese Admiral called his men on deck. The guns barked, the Russians were no more. . . ." Each sentence hammered out more often than in an anthem. But perhaps the most interesting is one which gives a long and wonderfully accurate account of the Boer war. How the Poa army invaded the koloni, and the ose ("horses," pronounced aw-sey—the Fijian has an immense respect for a horse), and Sikote (Scotch), and Airisi (Irish) were sent to meet him; how Letismeci ("c" is "th") was besieged, and soldiers captured and sent off to Kuruka to be judged; until Lota Bulla (Lord Buller) came through with the Airisi to carry forward the fight of the Marama (the Lady —the Queen). Lota Rovate swept past the Moda Riva. The Tiamani (Germans) did not play fair, but smuggled guns in piano-cases till a manuwa came on them. The Kolonis sent men, and they were surrounded and asked to surrender, "but they flung surrender to the winds behind them." Pateni Powell was at last reached in Mafekini. All the world sent up one shout; and Kuruka in Peritoria left his lady

behind him, his men without gold; jumped on to a train with all the money and went off.

The Fijian has a colossal respect for fighting men. Whilst the Admiral was sitting watching the meke on the cricket ground, quite unconscious of the awe he was inspiring, this whispered conversation took place amongst the men squatting a few yards away.

"See that man there, Joseva—the one in the front?" nodding at the Admiral.

"I see him."

"That man is the Etmiral from the manuwa."

Follows what the papers at the time of the Dreyfus case came to call "sensation"—knee slappings; and the Fijian equivalent for "My!" low appreciative "ohs" as from a crowd watching fireworks. Noddings and pointings, portentously solemn and significant, "The Etmiral; that is then the Etmiral."

"And does he command all that big manuwa?"

"Io! He can tell her to go, and she will go where he says. He can tell her to bark, and she will bark."

More noddings and pointings as Joseva tells the news to the row behind him.

Two days before the ship came in, some natives were told the Admiral was two days out.

They were puzzled.

"Out there, over the sea?"

"Yes, out on the sea."

"But how do you know?" they asked.

"He says so. He says he will be here at 2 o'clock on Friday."

"But he is not here to speak."

"He spoke through the air to the manuwa in the harbour (H.M.S. Cambrian). You will see that he will be here at 2 o'clock on Friday."

Just at 2 o'clock on Friday the flagship swung round the reef and anchored. One of the natives came back to the official who had told him.

"I am sorry, sir," he said. "I did not believe you. But just now I saw the big manuwa come in at

2 o'clock." Then, shaking his head and in a low voice, "It is a god," he said.

They are an intelligent race; they appreciate all our little wonders. But they always cap them with one question, "Why do you not overcome death?"

. . *Like overgrown schoolgirls.* . .

. . . *Decked his ginger-coloured mop with flowers to be photographed.* . . .

Chapter VII.

TROUBLE IN STORE FOR FIJI.

It is not the fault of the Fijian that he can't work; or that he is a soldier and a gentleman. Neither is it his fault that Indians must be brought to his land who don't pretend to be either, and who are not above handling a hoe. It is the fault of the rain. But it is going to bring trouble. We saw a little both of Fijian and Indian. We could catch a dim peep of the trouble.

The guide book says: "If you get introduced to any of the chiefs you will be presented with abundance of food for yourself and your followers; therefore a few articles such as coloured handkerchiefs, shirts, pen-knives, etc., will be found very acceptable as presents."

That is good advice. There were three of us went across the hills to Rewa. We had no followers;

there was no room in the sulky, anyway. And it was fans we got—three plaited grass fans—not food. Otherwise the advice applied. We had driven inland half a day; seen the first clump of this year's cane grabbed out of a barge, transformed into glue, and the glue into sugar, all in one move. People had been very kind. One's head was a muddle of the crushings, mashings, boilings, centrifugalings, crystallisings of modern machinery. We thought to see, for a change, how the natives lived. So we rowed across the wide brimming Rewa River—where the women washed their clothes; and the men sailed lazy white cutters, something like yachts; and a thing between a mud dredge and a traction engine, with one big splashing wheel at its tail, towed half-a-dozen cane punts against the wind. We sought out a village, all made of brown leaves and set like a line of haystacks in the trees. It was an ideal village. It had colias and red flowering shrubs tucked on the newly-mown lawn around each house as neat and pretty as the Botanical Gardens. Most of it seemed to swarm with women and children in various stages of toilette. So we hurried rather scared to the one dark bee-hive doorway where we saw a man. He received us kindly, took us in, sat us down; two on mats, one on the only chair. He handed us each a fan and sat opposite. Behind him half the women and children trooped in, sat down, stared. They stared and giggled; we stared and fanned.

If you do that long enough you begin to feel foolish. The guide book ought to tell you what to do next. For hints on interviewing foreign potentates one could only think of silly, full-page pictures in the *Graphic*. Apparently the Amir and the Viceroy of India stare at one another happily for quite a long time. We were right so far, but it did not help much. It is thoughtless of the guide book to leave you with no better weapon than the wild, imbecile stare of rival babies dumped down to play with each other. The background giggled, and no wonder. So we cast about desperately for conversation; hove up

to the enemy one after another; fired a broadside of questions; returned to load up again. At last, when, to judge by the fatuity of the remarks, ammunition was running pretty low, we made a move, and handed back our fans. Our host shook his head. So we were to keep them. It was evidently up to us to do something. The guide book suggested coloured handkerchiefs, shirts, or pen-knives. But we had only the shirts we stood in. Coloured handkerchiefs are vulgar, and a grimy old pipe was hardly the thing. However, a cigarette might be better than nothing. So I opened my case and handled one to our host. With the ease of a diplomat he solved the question on the spot. He took the case, which was silver; folded it carefully, and stowed it gratefully in his pocket. You could not very well ask it back, after all. Only next time one will carry a spare shirt.

Now the inside of that house was floored with two or three speckless white cane mats. So far from it being the pigstye that our fancies give the natives to live in, everything was in perfect order; from the low stage—probably a bed—at one end, to the big pans and dreamy little fire that smoked on a square of bare earth at the other. It was a doll's house for tidiness. The Fijian is a gentleman, and lives in comfort. The only time he does any regular work is when he cannot help it, in gaol. We saw him as a convict chopping grass along the Rewa road-side, always gracefully, without undignified effort. He has a knife like a short sword; and makes his warder, who may be a little afraid, cook tea for him. Work, when he must do it, seems to agree with him. With a broad red arrow on his shirt, like the stamp on a sugar-bag, and a warder looking on, he steers the Governor's launch or trims the Botanical Gardens all day. There is little fear, so they say, of his getting back late to gaol at night; for if he is not in in time, he is locked out. That is what they tell tourists in Fiji.

Whatever the convicted Fijian may be, the free Fijian is there for ornament, not for use. He strolls

round Suva, cane in hand, one bright red hibiscus in the hair over even the plainest face, a chain of flowers round his neck like a hero in opera. As for the background, it was simply stage scenery—"An open place, in Suva." Bright, ricketty, stage shops, right and left, with wooden stage verandahs. A triangle of grass poisonously green between them. At the back—obvious drop scene—a yellow esplanade. Seen through a row of flat stage palms and acacias, the sea—gloriously blue except for the white-toothed breakers nibbling at the reef far out. Up and down that stage strolled the usual crowd of many colours, the most various crowd in the world. You expected it to split into companies and open with a ballet. There were a few Europeans all in operatic white; a white baby or two as fragile, delicate, pale as porcelain; a bunch of Fijian women in long white or pink baby pinafores—butterfly frills at the shoulders and no waists—like overgrown schoolgirls. Some beautiful Fiji chorus men, obviously ornamental and not useful; and a dozen types of the Indian, strictly for use.

The Indian would have been a failure as an ornament. But he did not try to be one. He carried an umbrella like a household god, and often tucked his skinny legs into woollen socks and his socks into hob-nailed boots; so that his shanks looked like road-menders' stamps. Wherever we saw him winding through the streets or in the fields he was going ceaselessly about his work, as mild as any lean, patient, over-driven cow. The strange part of it is that, though he seemed so spiritless, he had been committing nearly all the murders in the island. The Fijians are at least four times as many, and distinctly more ferocious. But the Indian murders simply because he is passionately moral. A third and only a third of the coolies imported must, by law, be women. So occasionally a wife goes wrong. When that happens the Indian punishes pretty thoroughly. It is usually the women he kills—cuts off her head at the least.

There were six Indians waiting to be tried for

their family murders when the Powerful was in Suva. I saw two of the murderers in gaol—two delicate, weak slips of men whom one would have thought incapable of killing a fly. They were charged with cutting a woman into pieces. They did not seem to mind. A burglary case was dragging itself out the day before we left. A lazy maroon punkah swished softly as a cow's tail overhead. On the bench a keen, refined English barrister in the red robes of Chief Justice sitting at assizes; two local advisers beside him—there would be a jury in a case between white men; a crown prosecutor at the bar table; a Hindoo police-sergeant, portentously solemn, with a beard that all the wrens in the world could have nested in, ordering about everyone over whom he had any excuse of authority. Lastly, four ignorant, untutored, sheepish coolies in the dock—one of them thrusting question after question plumb home upon a witness—as cleverly as a skilled barrister.

"You say you undertook to manufacture my jewellery? How is it that you came to do so without having a jeweller's license?"

"I only do it occasionally," said the witness, changing his feet and looking uneasy. "I only do it when people come and ask me."

"How many people have you manufactured for? . . . . " and so on. Most of this had to be interpreted into two languages in court. There are so many races that the State has had to raise police not only from Fijians and Hindoos, but from some half-a-dozen Indian races on the islands.

There is no doubt about the Indian working. We had one excellent view of the contrast. A planter, who took us in and fed us with all the gratuitous kindness that Englishmen do show out of England, had two servants, an Indian and a Fijian. Abazai, the Fijian, seemed to spend his day looking on. When first we saw him he had his mouth a good deal more than chock-full of biscuit, and half his ugly muzzle smeared with soot—it protected his complexion from the sun, he said. He took his orders like a good old

tame donkey; but, eating apart, the only thing I saw him doing was squatting in his hut door decking his ginger-coloured mop with a wreath of pink flowers for me to photograph. The Indian was working on the road for a contract his master had taken. He worked eight hours that day, and acted as milk-cart too; ran six miles with the can in the morning carried it back six miles at night. He did that every day. There were times when he had taken a message to Suva as well, 34 miles in all, and finished up turning somersaults. He was a grand servant. They said he had been a thief in India, but ran too fast for the police. Anyway, for the whole of that eight hours' navvy work, long-distance running thrown in, he gets 2s. a day, and is content. We saw him there on the road to Coli-i-Suva, chocolate black, slender as a girl; with long, crisp, black curls, a red handkerchief tied over his head milkmaid fashion. He was digging like a Trojan. The Fijian looks with entire contempt on the Indian; the Indian utterly scorns the Fijian; both look on the white man as inferior. He makes them do as he wants. So everybody is happy.

For all that, there are the seeds of trouble in Fiji. Thakombau, long ago, gave all his land and a good deal more to the Lady, the Queen—as to a chief; the other chiefs joined in. Various Governors ever since have assured them that she gave it back; or at least held it for them. So they have been selling it, and living famously on the purchase money. That is how all these gentlemanly Fijians always have a bran new coat and a clean kilt. But it is obvious they cannot sell land for ever, because there's not enough; and they will not lease it, because they want to buy fine clothes and a walking stick and dissipate all the money at once. So the British Government, anxious godfather, steps in and says: "I find you gave the land to me after all. I am going to let you lease it, but I am not going to let you sell it; for if you do sell it, instead of seeing you blue the price all in a week I shall keep it for you, and give you the interest to spend."

That is practically what Lord Crewe said a week ago in London. It annoys natives and whites both. The native only wants to blue money, not to save it; the white only wants to buy land, not lease it. The native will sell eagerly if he owns the land, without worrying the future; the white always wants to own land before he plays tricks with it which may treble its value. The native doesn't worry about the future, and the white doesn't worry about the native. There are 4,000,000 acres of unused land in Fiji, of which the Government is going to give the natives the rent, simply because if they do not live on the rent goodness knows what they will live on. They will probably cease to live at all. Still there are four-fifths of the land kept absolutely idle. You may judge by what is done on the one-fifth that is used, what might be done with the four-fifths.

Yet they are not doing quite the best even with the fifth that they do use. A cauliflower has cost 2s. 6d.; all sorts of vegetables that need only be thrown on that teeming black soil to grow in plenty are now imported. Still, the white men naturally want for their own some part of the land which the natives will not use. That is half the land question in Fiji. One must own that it does not impress one a tithe as much as the other half. It comes as a vast surprise to find in this coloured Fiji what is really the "White Fiji question." It is the question — not of whether the white man shall have Fiji for himself; but the question of whether he shall live there at all. There is the same question in Natal. The Fijian will not take the bread out of the white man's mouth; because he would not trouble to take any bread at all unless it dropped into his own mouth. But the Indian comes from a land where, in many years, after most desperate toil, he dies from having nothing to eat. And he finds this Fiji a paradise to work in. He can live on 7d. a day, with never a fear of famine or even disease, the rich earth giving a hundredfold everything he asks of her. He can finish his contract as labourer and then buy or lease a little land or a

shop ; bargain, buy, sell, plant, cut to his heart's content ; and grow quite rich in a few years.

He can do the work of every white man in Fiji, except the Governor, and do it more cheaply. He is doing it now, more of it every day ; planting cane, planting bananas, running shops and stores. The white man can only compete with him by using better brains or energy ; and he has not got them. So it simply comes to this : Is it good for Fiji that the white men should go and the Indians should take the place of them all—except perhaps the Governor, Chief of Police, a Judge, a sugar company, possibly a shipping agent ? Because if it is good it is happening fast enough. Seeing that we are all hopelessly selfish, and never think of letting our country stand between us and our money-making, one is not surprised to find that the Sugar Company thinks it is a very good thing that the Indians should plant cane. And a banana shipper told me that it was deplorable to see how the Hindoos were ousting the Europeans by planting cane ; but he thought it was rather a good thing they were planting bananas.

Is it ? There are few enough things the white man can do in Fiji. Is it good to let the native crowd him out of all ? It almost seems a day will come when Fiji will reach the parting of the ways. Either it will be held that the Indian has a right to live and work as he pleases ; in which case the white man will be crowded out. Or it will be held that Fiji is the better for having white leaders with white principles, such as they are ; in which case the Indian will remain if he likes after his contract is finished; but he will remain as a labourer. That is the " White Fiji question." It matters everything to Fiji.

And it matters a good deal to Australia. Fiji is really an Australian colony, though it does not care to be called so. The white men who govern Fiji come mostly from England ; the white men who trade there, except a few English and British-Canadians, come all from Australia. A French-Canadian or two were there besides, working, they say, with the coolies.

For a year or two, when the Americans of the South were fighting the Americans of the North, with no time to spare to grow cotton, Fiji jumped into a rich cotton trade. But that has fizzled out. Now all the trade goes to Australia and New Zealand in two sharply-divided compartments. All the sugar goes in the New Zealand compartment. Red-funnelled Union boats take it, and bring next to nothing back. Nearly all the bananas and all the copra (which is chopped cocoanut in the present and soap and oil in the future) go in black-funnelled A.U.S.N. steamer Suva to Sydney; and nearly everything that Fiji uses comes from Sydney. That is Australia's interest in Fiji.

Incidentally, both Fiji and Norfolk Island, for some reason connected with the tariff, look upon New Zealand as a far better friend than Australia. And are quite ready to risk your friendship by telling you so.

Clawence-Fitzclawence.

Chapter VIII.

ON THE BRIDGE—THE CONSUMMATION.

Band concert, dance, garden party; cricket and football on a day warm as Sydney midsummer. The ship's company, its hornpipes and its mandolines, gave "Clawence-Fitz-Clawence-you-know-don't-you-know" and other wonderful comedies aboard and ashore. Then we slipped, one Saturday morning, out of Suva back to business.

The Navy at the present exists purely for business. It used to manœuvre once a year in public, with special correspondents on most of the flagships, and a big flourish of trumpets at Spithead to start with. In these days, preparing for that visionary sea-fight, at high tension all the time, about the waters in which an enemy is most likely to be found some

In Suva—Obvious stage scenery.

. . . *There is no public at those meetings.*
(A part of a British Fleet at Lagos). . . .

day, go four big battle squadrons. On the coast of Portugal (which from time immemorial, by some ancient arrangement probably still binding in war time, is always made free to the British fleets when there is trouble toward) is a wide bay of a harbour known as Lagos. There once in each year the four fleets, or most of them, meet on business that is strictly private. For a month or three weeks there exists over the face of the Atlantic the nearest thing to the real thing. There is no public there at those meetings, no tugs to carry wide-eyed tourists and their cameras down the lines, no correspondents to jumble it all up. Yet any man in the Navy, officer or seaman, will tell you that such sights have been seen there in the last two or three years as have never been seen at a review or anywhere else before, and, it may be, will never be seen again.

Of late these meetings have mostly been ordained just when the world was settling down to its Christmas dinner. About the 20th December ships at home and ships abroad, solid fleets of battleships and cruisers, destroyers in little droves, not to speak of single ships of every sort and kind that have been recruiting their health in English yards, are tumbled out to sea. Two or three days later the white winter sun squints through the winter clouds on to a square of wintry sea, a spot out of sight of any land. At noon, if you were there, you would see a mere patch of grey, heaving Atlantic. Not a sail, nor any smoke; perhaps not even a seabird. At five minutes past the noon there peeps above the skyline the faintest smudge of something—smoke, from some steamer stoking; then a notched fringe of topmasts—the first sign of the 14 battleships of the Channel Fleet. As they come over the horizon there are other smudges, other masts, other funnels showing up over the edge of the sea in south and west. Up they crop, thicker and thicker, here, there, everywhere, like the pine round the rim of the western plains. Squadrons, divisions, big ships, small ships, for some two or three hours the ocean is alive with warships

old and new trooping in from every quarter of the globe to that meeting. It is like the reunion of old weather-beaten faces at some travellers' club, after many years. Delighted little crowds squeeze into the gun-ports of every ship. "There's the old Duncan"; "Here's the Good Hope. Was on her under ——, in nought four. Wonder if old Nobbie is still with her"—a hundred other excited comments from men that know every rope and pin and every other gadget aboard of their old friends. The crowd thickens till, in some years, its heads may be counted in hundreds. In one year the day for that re-assembling fell out stormy, blowing half a gale. But they re-assembled all the same. The battleships closed in, all a-bobbing and a-curtseying, punching and punching again huge curtains of spray out of the heavy grey seas, their forecastles awash all the time. As for the scouts—swift, flimsy, wisps of some 3,000 tons—they were plunging and kicking like wild horses racing round a paddock. The watch, unable to stand, was tied on with ropes to the bridge; the engineers lashed up by their engines, for fear of falling into them. When they moved about their engine-room they crawled on hands and knees while they worked. They were all miserably sea-sick—it had been quite superfluous to swallow anything for the last 48 hours. But not a man could have guessed it who saw them come in and swing round sharp and short altogether—a sort of a tumbling feat in that sea-way—and settle down to the work that brought them there.

The story of that work is told shortly in the *Times* and the service magazines. It was carried out under a man that retired a year ago; a man that had a horror of advertisement; a man of whom nine-tenths of us have never heard; a man of whom you will be told more in a ward-room than of all the rest of the powers that be put together; a man that was beyond all question the greatest English sailor since Nelson; a man that a fair part of the service believes the greatest seaman there ever was; a man who in the manœuvres, year after year, since the later '80's, when

he took his fleet unseen in fog into an Irish harbour through the very midst of a blockading fleet, has invariably found by some strange instinct the one thing to be done, and has always done it; the man, and the only man, who has handled immense modern fleets as though they were a four-in-hand, pulled them, tugged them, swung them within a biscuit toss of each other's rams, apparently by sheer intuition; the man who has drilled them, dressed them down, sweated and thrashed them, stopped their leave and cut short their holidays, till they ended by almost worshipping him; a man who did not praise overmuch, but whose praise was worth getting. There was a crew in one of the Cruiser Squadrons that by keenness had done wonderful shooting. When it came to the great test their target tore, and many shots went unmarked. They lost their first place; but the Admiral certainly knew, they said, for he signalled them on their good shooting. During the same commission they found the enemy whilst scouting, stuck to him like a terrier night and day, and brought up the fleet. The same Admiral signalled, "Well done, ——." Those two signs were the only ones that they got of the Admiral's pleasure during two years of that commission. But to this day they tell you of them with glowing eyes. It was that man who has made possible scenes such as the only two which there is room here to describe.

The first was on a time when some hundreds or so of the warships of the ordinary seagoing fleets of England were at their work off Lagos. They were to moor that day in Lagos. So they moored, the whole bunch of them. They moored at one and the same instant. They steamed straight in, the whole regiment of them, each ship in its proper division, each division in its place. A signal pennant was sent up, and the moment it started to come down again every ship dropped one anchor; with the way still on her, dropped a second; went astern, ran back till her cables were the same length; shackled them together. That was all. There was no one to see it, save perhaps a grimy Portuguese fisherman or two, and a

Hebrew providore on the look-out for orders. Even the town of Lagos was out of sight, over the water.

The other spectacle was away from the land altogether. It was that Admiral's last command, the climax of 52 years of single-minded, wonderful work. He was leaving his last fleet in a week or two — his last and greatest fleet. So just for one morning he took all the battleships, forty of them, out of the bay, and worked them as one fleet, the biggest fleet that was ever worked together; and worked them as no fleet was ever worked before. He took them at 17 knots, the highest speed of the slowest ship, which was full speed for the whole,—and hour after hour he flung that whole fleet at its full speed this way and that, up and down, and across, with the ships at two cables' distance from one another.

To realise what that means you must know that to work a single division at that distance at full speed is an unheard of thing. There were seven divisions here, and one mistake in the signals would have piled one on top of another like trucks in a railway smash. But for hours they weltered after one another, and split and divided, and joined and swung their great sterns round at racing speed like the skirts of a chorus girl. The public when it read over its morning tea and toast that the battleships at Lagos were exercised at full speed skipped the paragraph, and went on to something it could understand, the test match, or the horrible details. The pity of it, that such a spectacle was wasted on a fisherman and a Portuguese Jew. But all the Navy knows, and, after all, that is what matters. In every ship's company for thirty years there will be men who were there. They speak of it as the sight of their lives. In all his 52 years' service, fate never threw that Admiral in the way of a single battle on the sea. But no one knows when the results of that day's impression will die. It may well be as fruitful as a great victory and a worthy end of a great career.

The man who did it went over the side a month or two later. He had begun by fighting Arabs with

the hilt of a broken sword. He rose by living for his work. He worked with a third of the usual staff. He hated women, dances, holidays; he dressed shabbily ashore. But if he said: "The enemy will on Monday be either at A or B," there on Monday the enemy was. He had an immense courage, and a charm which won every captain in his fleet. His last signal was: "I hope that you will continue your discipline to the last, and that there will be no cheering when I go over the side." He refused to go to the Admiralty, because there was a retiring age, and he had come to it. The King made him Admiral of the Fleet, and rumour says that he argued with the King.

We all know of "Charlie" Beresford; we all know of "Jack" Fisher; we all know of "Percy" Scott. In spite of his personal modesty, it is just a little surprising that we never heard of Admiral Sir Arthur Knyvet Wilson, V.C. — commonly "Tug". Wilson.

. . *In line ahead, which is Navy for Indian file.* . .

Chapter IX.

ON THE BRIDGE—THE CAUSE.

Those scenes at Lagos would be impossible without the engine-room; futile without the guns; but themselves they were the result, the consummate result, of work on the bridge.

It is a night in June some years ago on the North Atlantic; not a fair sample of midsummer night, either, but a night so bitter that the watch turns in with its jackets frozen as white as Father Christmas. A night so dense that the ships of the Cruiser Squadron, feeling their way through the grey fog blanket in line ahead (which is Navy for Indian file) can make out no trace of the next ahead, not even the glare of her stern light. She is there, no fear of that, her stern just 250 yards from your ram; but she might have been sunk an hour since for any sign of her that you can see. All you know is that you are pitching head on into a dumb blank wall. The only guide to go by is a splashing, foaming, dancing speck of grey, which races like some imp of the sea through the black water beside the bridge. It is really

a white barrel tied by a tow-rope to the stern of the cruiser ahead. The Navy has tried having lights fixed on rafts, and many other plans. But so far it has found it can see best a thing like a whitewashed beer-barrel. So long as the officer of the watch keeps that bobbing white cork alongside of him abreast of the bridge he knows his ship is in her station. In the far corner of the bridge, beyond the yellow haze of the chart-house windows, and the binnacle light, beyond certain dark, muffled forms as watchful and still as figureheads, save where their white breath comes and goes through the circle of the light, you may just make out the bent figure of the lieutenant of the watch as he peers down toward the muddy surface. As you stare at it from the Domain, the bridge, even of a big steamer, may not seem very high. But it stands, for all that, much higher than the roof of a two-storey house. From up there that barrel looks a long way down. If it is not kept well in sight it has a way of vanishing quietly and quickly into the fog ahead or astern. Even as you watch it, it begins to edge slowly forward like the tail-light of a train that has overtaken you and is slipping ahead. The bent figure leaves the side. You hear the distant chilly clang of a gong in the engine-room. That is an order to add another revolution to the speed. A brake seems to have been put on the barrel, for you crawl up on it again.

All that comes in the ordinary way to His Majesty's fleets at sea. As a matter of fact, on this particular night, when Lieutenant Tommy Fawkes, R.N., left his warm bunk at midnight in flannel trousers and a sort of pea-jacket, and climbed shivering up to the bridge, there was no white barrel to be seen; only the vague flare of a light somewhere forward in the fog. Sometime before the barrel had vanished. Possibly the long beak of your own ship knows more about it, if it would only speak. So Mr. Fawkes' predecessor, the officer of the first watch, put on a revolution or two, and shoved the ship's nose random into the mist until a faint halo, which was

the stern-light of the ship ahead, showed on the port bow. They had hugged that light ever since. It seemed a long way off to Tommy, when he came on the bridge. But he heard the captain had thought so, too. He had ordered his ship to close in, and before they knew where they were there was another light right above them, the steaming light on the mast of the next ahead. After that they fell back in a hurry. The light, after all, cannot have been 50 yards away.

The captain had turned in. Tommy's orders are to keep that light just in view — to punch along, keeping the ram of his ship not 50 yards astern of a ship he can barely see; with another ram 250 yards astern of him, tracking him by a barrel tied to his tail. In each of the four frail boxes with which he was set there to juggle lives a small township of some 700 souls. It is a sleeping township just now. There is only the haze of a few lamps along the deck. A silent figure or two moves occasionally on some business of the night. The rest of the village is tucked snugly into bunks, hammocks, odd doorways and corners of the deck, trusting implicitly in the mature skill and experience of Tommy. To add to his comfort, next ahead of him but one is a ship which, if anything goes wrong, may tell Mr. Fawkes all the Admiral thinks of him. With the knowledge of which to steady his nerves, Mr. Fawkes, who is only 21 after all, and whose experience consists in having navigated a destroyer pretending to be a tramp at 10 knots from Falmouth to Gibraltar and back, uncaught by the B cruisers which were playing at war, sets himself to shadow and pound after the next ahead as softly as a London detective.

So through the first hours of the morning he shadowed her. The mantle of the fog wrapped itself round him and the dim forms beside him; trailed their white breath away in clouds behind them; flung itself in wisps and folds like a mysterious drapery between them and the pale foc'sle deck far beneath. For 80 minutes by the chart-room clock all went well; until,

for some reason or another, the light in front seemed to go ahead into the fog. Probably it was a thicker wrack than usual whisked between. But Tommy was not to know that. He rang at once for another couple of revolutions. Imperceptibly the ship quickened, and slowly but surely pulled that light back to him. It grew and grew, and he began to wonder whether it was not almost as bright as it had been, as it ought to be, when . . . . . Allmachtige ! What's that up there ?

High above, ever so high, almost up above Tommy's head, there is calmly shining a constant, gentle speck of yellow. That light is not on his ship. It is on the mast of the next ahead. " We're on top of her," yelled from the bows. We are. A rush to the telegraph to signal off some of the speed. The helm hard a-port—and, as the ship's head swings slowly off to the right, Tommy is conscious of a hazy deck-light and an awful grey side dreadfully close beside him. He is actually looking down on a slab of pink deck. And he is not clear of shocks yet. He knows it all too well. As the bow of the ship falls off to starboard, two other things happen. She loses her way, and her stern swings out to port, like a tail, across the path which she was travelling, and which the next astern is travelling still. Tommy knows the next astern is uncomfortably close. He has felt her in the nape of his neck all the time. She has been following his vagaries as closely as she could. He knows exactly where to look for her. And here she comes, sure enough. He can make out the stem of her like a purser's dirk parting the cold mist just clear of his stern.

Thanks to the Providence that watches over the British Navy—just clear. Tommy had time to shiver then. Nobody was going to sink now, for all that His Majesty's 10th Cruiser Squadron, officially imagined to be in line ahead, was clumped around the stern of its happily unconscious flagship like the fringe around a dishevelled tassel. With any luck the Admiral would be asleep just then. The only thing was to get things

quietly straightened out again before the fog thinned, and he woke up. That, without a word, but with the perfect understanding of schoolboys in a scrape, these three ships of 10,000 tons* and more set about to do. The light of the next ahead had vanished before Tommy was able to start in chase of it. There was nothing for it but to punch ahead as straight as might be. But with the luck that helps the young, not three minutes passed before he found the glare of her right ahead of him. He fastened on to her then and there. The next astern dodged in behind. And the tail of His Majesty's Squadron swung again in its place.

I would there were space to relate the other events of that interesting night. How the next ahead hung out another buoy instead of the sunk one. How after a time this buoy edged off to one side, and afterwards began to zig-zag first to the right, then to the left. How Tommy concluded his next ahead had lost sight of the flagship's barrel, and was executing a curve of search all of her own to find it. How, finally, to Tommy's intense indignation, she waltzed calmly across Tommy's bows—performed, in fact, very much the same evolution that Tommy himself had performed earlier in the morning—and ultimately disappeared altogether. How Tommy, to his inordinate gratification, searched for and found a light ahead for the second time that night; and followed it complacently to the end of his watch. How the man who relieved him, and split a pot of cocoa with him at 4 a.m., discovered that the ship Tommy had found was the flagship; and that the next ahead, the ship he had lost, was following Tommy; how, without unnecessary fuss, they quietly executed in the dark a general post not provided for in the text-books; and were there in the morning, all in their places, puffing ahead so innocent, that even Tommy wondered if his memories of the early morning were all nightmare.

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* Half of a cruiser squadron is shown running in to its moorings at Lagos in one of the photos opposite page 7.

That night is typical of work on the bridge. In the day when it comes to be tested it will be done off the bridge. In that battle of the future—and in these days when they are playing that battle—the bridge is to be deserted; the navigator will have to keep station from the conning-tower, coolly, mathematically judging the distance of that wallowing stern ahead, with a different haze to hide it, the deck burning under his nose, and something clipping and chipping and crashing through the stanchions and cowls at his back; and one will realise that the work of the executive officer needs, perhaps, in short spells of great stress, even steadier nerve than work in the engine-room. It certainly reaps a more obvious reward, because it is done in the daylight, and people clap their hands when it is done well.

After being handled and driven some years about the world by men whom age of patient scientific training have fitted for the trust, each of these delicate costly toys of England comes back to her old nursery. High on the bridge her officers, in the neat blue and gold of the Navy, lead her up the familiar river-mouth and swing round to the dockyard. There at the basin gates a figure clambers up the side, a burly drab figure with three or four mates. It has a towselled beard and a dented billycock hat. It may or may not have a coat. But it has two small hand flags or a whistle.

From that time the captain can go below. He is out of charge of his ship. True she has to wind through lock-gates into a basin and across it and through more locks into another basin beyond; almost scraping the sides off fifty other ships, under their noses and over their rams and finally into a row of them like a horse at a trough. But the blue and gold officers who with engine gongs and twinkling brass rails and the science of the century have brought their Dreadnought so far may sit and look on. High above them from some favourite perch in the rigging a man in a dented billycock hat is waving little flags, speaking incomprehensible words to men in billycocks below.

There might not be a man in the ship for all they heed. Captain and quartermaster, it is all one. But they have hawsers strung out like wheelspokes, and the ship moves gently under an exquisite art. Her officers need not fear for her. She knows those kind, horny hands even better than theirs. They are the friends of her babyhood.

. . *In india-rubber shoes.* . .

Chapter X.

THE SHIP'S COMPANY.

"For the first six months," said Mr. Stubbs meditatively—"for the first six months of that commission, the commander 'e give us 'ell. We wasn't two days out when 'e see me trottin' up the poop very genteel to quarters. 'E says, 'Look, my boy,' 'e says, 'I don't tell you to walk an' I don't tell you to run; I tell you to fly.' That was the making of me," added Mr. Stubbs modestly.

Most respectable people were in bed; but Mr. Stubbs and I were standing on the poop. I was there because the breeze was fresh on one's forehead as only a tropical night breeze can be when you have scribbled into the small hours in a tropical cabin below. Mr. Stubbs was there because the rules of the service see fit to put him there in case anyone jumps overboard. Night and day, when the ship is at sea, a marine walks just over the ceiling of the

Admiral's cabin—in rubber-soled shoes—across the stern from one lifebuoy to the other. This was Mr. Stubbs' night. From two of the grey funnels ahead the soft black smoke was trailing away to the West. The arc lamp over the long stern gun was having fits. A soft rattle came now and again from the wireless room on the after bridge. Somebody on board was speaking to somebody at New Caledonia or Wellington or Fiji, or perhaps on a ship at sea. I was leaning on the rail lazily watching the kick of the stern, the scurry of waters underneath, the whirling, phosphorescent corkscrew churned out by the screw. I watched the black figure of Mr. Stubbs go up and down on his beat as regular as a pendulum for half an hour or so; until another black figure in india-rubber shoes came up and took his place. Then, by way of saying good night, I had asked Mr. Stubbs his views on Australia as a station; and one thing led to another.

"That was in the Sidmouth in the Channel Fleet, sir," he said. "Tug Wilson—Admiral Wilson—'e were Commander-in-Chief."

From his tone it was obvious this sentence explained a great deal more than it seemed to.

"I never saw a crew like that one," he went on. "I remember when at last the time come we was to meet all the other fleets. That was at Lagos in ought six. I shan't forget that sight, sir. Nor I shan't forget a sight I see the first time it come to an evolution. We was over-anxious, I think, all trembling like with nerves. I couldn't eat no bloomin' breakfast that mornin' myself. We 'adn't met such a crowd before. You see, there was four fleets, the Straits and the 'Ome and the 'tlantic an' Us. The evolution was out nets, an' we was ready for it. We come tumblin' like puppies out of a kennel. The booms was swung out in beautiful time, and was all but done, when by the noise I 'eard I guessed there must be some part of the net hitched up. What I looked up and saw was a or'nary sober seaman, sittin' on the boom, with a pusser's dirk in 'is fist—that's a big jack-knife, sir,—his eyes startin' out of his 'ead,

choppin' and tearin' away at the steel mesh like a starin' maniac. They got it free, but that hitch spoiled our time for us. We beat 'em in 'boats row round the fleet,' and on the 'ole we come out about even.

" 'Ave you seen a picture of wild 'orses boltin' with their 'eads in the air in front of a prairie fire. That was the way orders was carried out on the Sidmouth. They was blind mad, sometimes, I think. It all begun with that commander. We was hoistin' in the picket boat, an' very charmed with ourselves. But it weren't his idea of hoistin' ; so we hoisted it out and in again when otherwise we should have been having our dinner. I tell you, sir, inside of six weeks we was bloomin' flyin' machines."

Mr. Stubbs drew a long, expressive breath. You would swear he was sorry that he was not to hoist out a picket boat then and there.

" We could moor with the swivel all fixed inside of ten minutes then," he continued, looking critically up at the awning, which was flapping heavily above our heads as a wayward gust lifted it. " And as for them things, you wouldn't believe me—but we 'ad our awnings set and tied, and the men off the deck and the pennant up, within ten seconds of the signal for the fleet to up awning.

" Ten seconds ! There weren't another ship in the fleet that could touch that. Of course it was not like settin' the awning would be on this ship. We 'ad a roose——"

" A what ? "

" A roose — an invention like — of the first-lieutenant's. The awnin' was all fixed on the deck ready before'and. We just hoisted it and set it like as you might set a sail. The other ships 'ad rooses, but they none come up to ours. Clearin' ship for action, we 'ad a roose for that. You 'ad to mind your way about the poop, for the 'ole gear 'ld fall

flat if you tripped on it. You 'adn't 'ardly to pull a rope, and all the stanchions was over the side.

"It wasn't long before we could beat the Channel Fleet at anything. The men was fair race'orses. Nothin' 'ld stop 'em. They 'ld hack it away sooner. If anything hitched it was 'Cut it, you fool.' That come to be a sayin' in that there ship—'Cut it, you fool.'

"We was over-anxious, at Lagos, when we met the fleets; and we only done moderate, as I told you. That was at first. By the time we finished we was alright. We beat them in the boats, we beat them in the evolutions, we beat them in battle practice and the gun-layers' test. We couldn't stop our bloomin' selves. There come to be almost too much rushin' and tearin' and breakin' of things in that ship. But when the commander eased down after six months of it, 'e 'ad such a crew as never was. When they went 'ome and paid off they'd forgot 'ow to enjoy their-selves—s'elp me bob they 'ad, sir. They was like lost lambs ashore. You mayn't believe it, and I don't know it they'd ha' believed it theirselves; but they was really itchin' to be at their rooses again, takin' the time out of the other ships."

Mr. Stubbs was looking at the red butt ends of the arc lamp, which had just expired after a struggle like the opening of a soda-water bottle. But, by the tone of his voice, it must have been a heaving grey sea that he saw just 12,000 miles over the skyline. There was a real regret in his throat as he went on.

"They left a nucleus crew in her in the dockyard —two-fifths of the old crew. And a new commander come down and took over. After about a month we was ordered to take in ammunition. The new commander—'I am reckoning we shall 'ave to allow two days for the ammunition,' he says casual like to our Number One. Our orf'cers didn't say nothing. But 'is eyes was nearly comin' out of 'is 'ead when we took on all the ammunition in one day, and the coal in less than 'arf the time what 'e give us. She

was a wonderful ship, was the old Sidmouth. The Good 'Ope come alongside with Percy Scott; an' she beat our gunnery and put up a record for coalin'. But I don't want to see no better crew than that as long as I live. Everybody knows what they done in the Sidmouth, and they'll carry the name of that commission with them on every ship they sail in."

Mr. Stubbs looked for a long, long time out on the black, restless water before he went on. "I s'pose you don't 'arf believe all that, sir," he said. "But it was the evolutions what do it.

"Admiral Wilson, 'e give us the or'nary evolutions in the Channel Fleet, same as 'ere, every day of the week; an' there was extra ones besides on three days. I s'pose people in Australia think it is all like this; but, you see, it's different with a fleet. It's ship against ship all the time. Don't matter what they're doin' for an evolution—that is what's against the other ships, sir—they're fair tumbling over themselves to get it done quicker 'n the rest. Each ship runs a pennant up when she's done, and the 'ole fleet knows she's done. You 'aven't got no time to look round whilst you're breakin' your neck over doin' an evolution. But whenever they're through with it, you should just see them cranin' their necks like young starlin's to look if the pennant is up on any ship before theirs."

There is no doubt, hard work though it is, the men half enjoy the excitement of evolutions in a big fleet. That is one strong reason for training men in fleets, not in isolated ships. President Roosevelt actually said he was sending this American fleet around the world for its training.

A few days since, going on deck after tea, one found the wireless room—a wooden deckhouse on the after bridge, bandaged round with what looked like quilting, as if it were a padded room. Only it was padded outside. It turned out we had been "preparing for action." The padding was hammocks, wrapped roll after roll about the outside of the wireless room

so as to catch and stop splinters. Preparing for action you put all you can in the way of the enemy's guns. This ship has a belt of coal 24 feet thick along part of her side already. But there are nets to be flung over woodwork; narrow compartments—coffer dams—alongside of the engine-room to be filled with water; watertight doors to be shut; traps in the armoured deck slammed tight so that the ship is bottled off into so many watertight, shell-proof boxes. By that arrangement they say the Dreadnought can have 100 feet of her side scraped away and still float, so long as the other boxes are sound. If you are in one you stay there. If the water comes in, too, you must keep it out; or climb 30 feet through some authorised air-hole in the roof above you.

They "cleared for action," too, the other day—got everything out of the way of the ship's own guns; flattened the rails and derricks along the side. Excited seamen were doubling on to the poop, bolting off, hugging the Admiral's and captain's and commander's cabin chimneys, which stick out of the quarterdeck and smoke over your head, bundling away companion-rails and skylights, and other gear. And then, as they say, a strange thing happened. On a sudden everyone stopped dead. It looked as though the end of the world were taking place under one's very eyes—the final freezing of humanity. A line of men trotting up the gangway became petrified. A bugle was blown, and everyone, officers and men, stood like a statue exactly as he happened to be when the sound of it caught him; and listened. It turned out the "Still" had been sounded. Someone in authority had a comment to make, and the ship's company came to a stop wherever it was caught until the comment was over. Then they went on clearing for action. In a minute or two the deck looked naked and dangerous. At least there was not a rail or a stanchion to prevent you rolling over the flat edge into the sea.

It has been said the men were excited. That is an exaggeration. One has only seen the British

seamen excited once. Yesterday the flagship sighted the New Zealand coast and ducked in under the great Barrier Island, past Rangitoto into this miniature Sydney of Auckland. When we moored, late in the afternoon, off a point that is a mixture of Circular Quay and Dawes' Point, it may have looked a very placid operation from the outside. It generally does. All that you notice is the anchor dropping for no apparent reason off the side, a huge feather of foam, the rattle of a chain through the hawse-pipe, a flag coming down from the peak and going up at the stern. But if you look at it from just inside the ship's wall by the hawse-pipe, the scene is more like a dog-fight. All you know there is that the port cable runs suddenly through the room with a noise like the shunting of railway trucks, only a thousand times more deafening; the air is thick with a cloud of faded red rust; a moment later the starboard cable starts, too, doubles the uproar, running as simply as cotton off a reel. Only one of the links has often smashed a man's leg by merely touching it. Gradually the shattering clamour ends; and then painfully they begin to tug the starboard cable back, not through its own hawse-pipe, but around the bows and through the port pipe; so that they may bring the two cables together; tie them by a swivel; and fix the ship to swing round the fork of an inverted Y rather than sweeping all round the fairway, knocking holes in half the harbour traffic in the process. You must have a swivel at the fork or the cables will kink every time the ship swings a circle. Many merchant ships let it kink so, and have to be towed around the reverse way before they can up-anchor again. But Kings' ships may have to start any moment. So they swivel amidst uproar undiluted. All you can see through the dust-cloud is the cable coming slowly home, bringing with it into the flat such portion of the bottom of Auckland Harbour as the hose cannot remove. (That, by-the-bye, is the water which you see running from the nose of any ship when she up-anchors.) A dozen men are

struggling with their heads on the ground and their legs in the air, with one officer running over their backs, and the head of another glaring down the gangway from the deck. Everyone is shouting at once. It only differs from a street row in this, that everybody knows exactly what to do, and how to do it.

The British seaman is trained to such a refinement of discipline that he can almost do without it. Of the two forces on board ship, it is the marines that are strictly disciplined. The seamen have been handled more or less from boyhood, with such an effect that the stiff discipline of the Army is unnecessary for them; because a man who thoroughly knows his work does not need to be a machine. They can afford to let him talk and joke a little in his drill and stand and work more at ease than a soldier. The marines, who are men before they enter, are easier and quicker to get; and they are not supposed to be turned into the perfect, intelligent instrument that a sailor is. But Army discipline makes an utter change in a man in a short time. It is notorious, for instance, that a British soldier picked from the slums a year before is a safe person for any lady to look to who needs someone to take her part in the street. So the marine is disciplined like a soldier.

If that is the theory, all one can say is that the marine is a surprisingly excellent result. He is not quite as handy as the seaman, and perhaps he does not read or learn as much. But he has all the intelligent, ready-witted philosophy of the sailor, and more physique. He is a long-service, much-travelled man.

Only the other night Mr. Stubbs was standing looking over the rail at the Suva lights dancing in the back water of the Bay.

"Ah, but you should see Genoa, sir," he said pensively as I came up, "with the little lights twinkling high up on the hills above you. That's a beautiful harbour to lay in at night, and no mistake. Them Italians is a bit sudden, though, and can't say as the Spaniards is much better. The Germans is the decentest lot ever I struck—nice clean fellers what a

man can understand. Them French matlows, I brought up again' them, too. But what can you do with a feller that can't speak your language?" (One would have said "speak theirs"—only that is an argument the English-speaking race never could understand.) "We entertained them in Portsmouth last year over the Ont-ont Cordial. They seemed to enjoy theirselves. At least we got them to drink beer, and that's the chief thing, I s'pose.

"The Yanks are alright, only they are such beggars to swank"—by which, be it explained, Mr. Stubbs would say that American seamen are much given to exaggeration. "'Blow your god darn Navy sky high." But they couldn't, sir, he added modestly.

"They think their Navy's a long way out of sight of others. But I dessay we thinks ours best, too, and they thinks it's us that's swankin'."

Mr. Stubbs was careful to avoid saying so. But I rather suspect he was just a little piqued at the fuss of expectation over the American Fleet, which arrives here in a day or two. "This fleet of theirs that's comin'," he said, "it ain't their fleet; it's their 'ole Navy, sir. An' yet I see a fleet at Spit'ead where there was 180 ships, and that was only part of ours. A civilian, 'e wrote to the papers that 68 of them were unfit for action. 'E gave what were wrong with each of 'em, too, and got it pretty well right."

Now a man who can talk on like that, who has seen as much as Mr. Stubbs and appreciated it, cannot be an unintelligent man. And indeed everyone has something good to say of the "soldiers." They are trained for twelve years, and the biggest men in Army or Navy. In these days, seeing there is no work on ropes or sails, the Navy is ordered to drill physically, and run paper-chases round the ship to keep down the size of its collective waist.* The marine

* Curiously enough the seamen on the poop of the cruiser opposite page 7 are caught in the act—follow-my-leader round the ship. What sort of a platform the deck is to run on is shown by a look at the cruiser astern.

may be a trifle heavy about the hocks. But he won the prize for physical drill so often at the Military Tournament, London, that it was reduced to an absurdity and wiped off the programme.

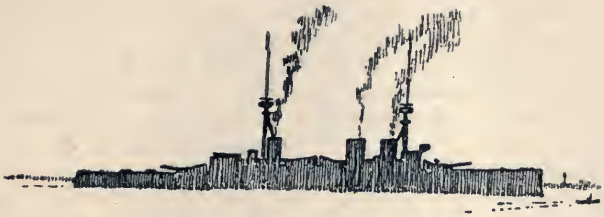
The bluejacket is suffering just now by comparison; because, being somewhat hard to get cheaply and in sufficient quantity when asked to tie himself up for twelve years, he has been allowed, if he thinks fit, to join for five. "Jest as they begins to be sailors they goes and quits," said a marine to me. The short-service men may be called out after their time is up. And it may be that the Navy could not be manned in war without this big reserve behind it to fill up the gaps. Unless that is so, judging by what one hears, it would seem a grievous pity to have abandoned the single long service.

It is a strikingly happy family, is this British Navy, and one sees it when officers and men are outside of their stiffer relations—in the good-humoured turmoil of coaling; in theatricals and sing-songs. To give just one instance. One will not forget in a hurry a scene on the quarterdeck towards the end of a winter afternoon at sea. It was the time for gymnastics, and on this particular day an amateur boxer of some note, who happened to be aboard, was sparring with the ship's champion. As they fought under the big, spluttering arc lamp, an irregular ring of officers on the edge of the circle of light watching them, one's eyes could not help wandering to a little cluster of white figures that silently grew in the background. Everyone seemed to find something of pressing importance in that part of the ship. There were at least three sentries over the lifebuoy, a small crowd to clean and mind the lamp, and a dozen others who happened to be caught on the way to somewhere. After the last round between yet another champion and the first, the white figures quietly melted, and the sentry was left to himself.

Going on deck this morning I came on a scene just as friendly. To-day this spotless flagship looks

for once like a coal-cellar. Yesterday you could have wiped the deck with a man and never have soiled his clothes. But all to-day good-humoured marines and seamen, with pipes in their mouths, and any sort of fancy head-dress pressed like a lady's bathing cap over their curls, have been trotting their little trolleys to various holes in the deck through a fog of twinkling brown coal-dust. When they coal in the Navy they do it all themselves, tie the collier alongside and swarm over her. In the fleets it is often a fierce competition. Even here the tonnage, jealously chalked on a blackboard hour by hour, shows that we have been taking it in at a rate unheard of when this ship was new. They say that with the fleets men will work as you had never believed they could; and look on their work as a big joke the while. They paint on their small barrows "Shamrock III." or "Meteor" or "Carbine," and hour after hour career wildly round corners, to collide with other famous yachts and racehorses. It is no use cleaning up for meals. You take them just as the coal-dust happens to have left you. It does your heart good to see the usually speckless naval officer sitting on the ward-room table munching sardines and coffee at midnight in sea-boots and a disreputable, battered Panama, as cheerfully grubby as a chimney-sweep. When they bless this New Zealand coal as dustless they are speaking in comparative terms. What they mean is that you should just see the greasy, ankle-deep squalor which best Welsh can produce.

For the next day or two the ship will be swept and painted. The "Australasian" Squadron (they are particular about the "—asian" in New Zealand) represented by H.M.S.S. Encounter and Pioneer, is speaking to us across the hills—tells us it is coming up the coast. They will lie alongside, painted their best. The object of it all is well on its way now. Auckland is in a wild state of expectation. At last we are to see, not one battleship—we have never seen that before; but the fleet of a great sister people.



There are three British Cruisers of 530 feet. . . .

Chapter XI.

THE AMERICANS.

Auckland, Sunday, August 9.

Sitting on top of Mount Eden, with a cheap telescope, waiting for the sun to rise!

The American Fleet is to reach Auckland about breakfast-time. There were people moving in Auckland at 5 a.m., but there are none up here yet. In the harbour three or four miles below one can see the lights of three British warships, and further up stream the American supply ship, Culgoa. The tops of the North Shore hills, and the cone of Rangitoto beyond, are rising dark from the mist that is folded about their feet like cotton-wool. Fires are smoking here and there across the plains like cigarettes laid aside on a table edge; and over it all, from far away to the right, there is growing fast a light which shows lemon-coloured over the hills, and against the mist a wonderful rosy red. Down harbour creeps a small two-masted steamer, taking some of the earlier spec-

. . . *The smoke of a great battle fleet.* . . .

tators, or the pilots, or the doctor. A couple of spectators climbed the hill, stamp their feet for cold, search the skyline with their glasses.

Where will they come in—inside of the great Barrier Island, or outside? Far against the horizon, where the Great Barrier should be, is the shaded grey slope of mountain-side. They can't be far off that mountain at this moment. That mountain . . . . now that you look again—is it a mountain? Can that be the island? Underneath it, through the glasses, one can just make out a line of little specks, one, two, three—sixteen of them; the last almost invisible in the haze. That island was no island after all, but the far-off smoke of a great battle fleet. On it all, just at this moment, the sun rises.

Little clusters of people are on every hill-top—knots can be made out on every shoulder and knuckle of the harbourside; at Remuera and Farnell, and on the crests across on the North Shore side are little notches and nicks showing against the mist. Down the harbour fairway troop a few launches and small steamboats. There came the bang of a gun fired, by order of Sir Joseph Ward to let the town know it was time to come out and look. It was rather late in the day really, for by far the best sight of all—that mysterious, distant bank of smoke—was an hour and half gone. Indeed, very few at all saw it. We found on coming into town that some spectators thought the fleet had anchored last night outside the harbour.

And so these pretty toys, for they looked like nothing else, swept past Rangitoto and into the low sea fog that hemmed the land. And the great fleet had come.

For four days Waitemata Harbour has been all lop-sided, over-crowded ferry-boats crawling round the fleet. Motor boatmen made hay whilst the sun, for a wonder, shone. One confessed he was taking £10 a day.

Auckland took them to its heart; assured them,

in speeches and on placards, it was God's own country; gave them specially-printed books with elaborate covers and beautiful views of all the principal Mayors; took them into tea-rooms and oyster-shops and all the public-houses up and down Queen Street; treated them, honestly speaking, magnificently. The men of the fleet had not expected it, and they honestly seemed touched by it; and strolled around with cameras or got enthusiastically waterlogged with entire impartiality.

The white sides and buff funnels have lain all round us. People said they were prettier than our grey till the novelty wore off. Then they found they had come to like that neat drab better than they realised. The Americans are to paint their ships grey when they get home. We had a good instance of the advantage of it. Officers on the Connecticut said that when they came up the harbour in the morning fog they had not seen the Powerful to salute her till they were on top of her.

"Say, she's real dusky," said one of them as we scuttled round her in one of the shrieking white peanuts of steamboats that swarmed over Auckland Harbour those days. "But I reckon she's frightened, some, in the middle of all this." And of course, big as she was, the smallest of them could have blown her into the air. You could see from the hills she was much the longest ship there. The Connecticut, just astern, was 16,000 tons, nearly 2,000 heavier. But she was 450 feet; and the Powerful 500 between the uprights, 538 nose to tail. Australians are not likely to see anything much longer than this old ship.*

Of course any one of the ships in Auckland could have made short work of us if they could have

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* There are three British cruisers 530 ft., three 500 ft.; three French cruisers 515 ft.; and the American Pacific fleet—eight cruisers of 502 ft. The Dreadnought, 18,000 tons, is only the Powerful's length; the Japanese Aki, 19,200 tons, is 18 ft. less.

Size has nothing to do with a warship's tonnage—only weight. Not many know that this very Powerful has now a bigger tonnage

caught us, which we should take mighty good care they did not. A "battleship" is whatever sort of ship can go to any sea through any weather and fight any ship she finds when she gets there. This flagship can go through any weather to any sea, but she could not fight American battleships if she found them there; because she is not built to fight battleships — only to find them and run away from them; which, being much faster than any of them, given a good look-out and a tender providence, she could easily do.

The American officers were a most open-hearted lot, with less humbug than any men one ever met. Unless they were far more insincere than ever they appeared, they have a very genuine friendship for British naval men. In Washington last year they gave our cruiser squadron such entertainment as it speaks of yet with tears in its eyes. Their Government allowed them literally to spend whatever they wanted for it. They are splendid hosts. Again and again their tempers were strained to breaking-point by the crowds which took charge of their precious white decks as only an Anglo-Saxon crowd can, poked their umbrellas into various holies of holies, and protested if they were stopped, as though it were a Commonwealth Department they were abusing.

[Later, in Sydney, they were being passed through in batches of thirty into the sacred, shellac-varnished ward-room flat to see the ship's beautiful plate. A burly citizen standing near a friend of mine, whose

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than when she was built. She was built with only twelve 6 in. guns. Afterwards four more, with 6 in. steel in front of them were built into her. Her old tonnage was 14,200. But now, with bunkers full and the new guns and ammunition, it is nearer 16,000. The Dreadnought, with a full load, goes up from 18,000 to 22,000. This makes warships to look frauds when compared to liners. The Powerful, 14,200 tons displacement, is one inch longer than the P. and O. India, 7,911 tons register. No cruiser is as long as the Moldavia. But the liner is the real fraud. The warship's tons are real tons. The liner's tons are reckoned by the space in her inside and have nothing to do with weight at all. A battleship will be far smaller than a liner of the same tonnage, and a cruiser somewhere between.

batch was held up for a moment by the sentry, was grumbling at the mismanagement. "You would think we were going to steal it," he said. "We're not afraid of that," said the marine. "It's too heavy."]

In spite of that, they put a brave face on it. I only once heard of one losing his temper, and that was at twelve o'clock at night. They even apologised that they could not show us all the secrets. "Every attaché of the British Navy knows what's in that box of tricks as well as we do," they would say; "and it's plum ridiculous we can't let you in." Every attaché may know it. But there's this much in secrecy—that the knowledge does not always reach every officer in the service.

However, what they could they showed us. And when we were tired,—well, spirits are not allowed on board an American warship. But they have most hilarious lemonade. Some years since, an American and a British warship foregathered in China. As is the habit with those two Navies when they rub shoulders amongst foreigners, they lived very much aboard of each other; and the American ward-room discovered a certain genial spirit in British lockers. The loo-tenants suggested to the captain that there was something wanting in their mess. What was it? Sloe gin like the British mess had? Impossible, Captain was adamant. The loo-tenants revisited the British ship, and some days later the American captain was invited to dinner there. Round with the cigars came a refreshing drink, bottled by a Chinaman ashore, with an amateurish green label stuck ostentatiously across it—"Sloe Cordial." The captain was delighted with it. When he went back to his ship, still delighted, the ward-room asked casually if he had tasted "Sloe Cordial." He had. Did he not think it was an excellent drink for their mess, too? He did; and the Chinaman received a contract that kept him pasting green labels to the small hours of a summer morning.

One thing that the Americans at Auckland said

over and over again was: "When we started our Navy we took over all our traditions from your Navy." One did not realise what that meant till one day aboard the Connecticut. Suddenly came a familiar shrill whistle; and a throat deep as a geyser gurgled: "Yai—wai-hai-wai!" There was the same challenge at night, the same "Aye-Aye!" "No-No!" Whatever you wanted you shouted for the same "Messenge—r!" to fetch it. Their officers were older than ours; especially the captains, who cannot have averaged much under 60, at least 15 years older than most British captains. They were intelligent, courteous, widely read—authors of books many of them. They are old because they are only promoted by seniority. Our service is ideally youthful just now. It has been increasing so fast that everyone has been rushed up the ladder. But there's a formidable block ahead.

When America fought ship duels with England all through 1812, they found that wherever the two crews had the same training there was nothing at all to choose between the men. The French and Spaniards owned they would rather meet anyone than the English —except it was the Americans; but of those one was as bad as the other. It strikes one the same thing is true to-day. The American crews are as young as their officers are old—mere slips of schoolboys, brimfull of bright intelligence, sparkling and overflowing with humour. They had been through the State schools—hardly the class that we know as sailormen. But that is just the sort of man that does things unexpectedly great when the time comes. The British sailor will do the great thing that is expected. The sum works out equal, if you apply your mind to it. One cannot help thinking that the Australian seaman will have every bit as much intelligence as the American; and the nerves and energy of the British. His difficulty will be discipline.

Their pay made them rich beside us. Where our men draw rations of flour, make pies of it themselves,

and take it to the cook to be baked, they pay for their food like officers. You came upon them in cabs and in motor-cars, whisking round the street corners with cameras on their backs. They slouched a bit. Their discipline did not obtrude. But they seemed to like their officers, and worked cheerfully, without growl.

One thing especially tickled them. "I ha'nt stopped laffin' not since we got here," one said to me. "You all have such a funny accent." They evidently took it for Cockney.

"'Ah d'you like ar 'Arbour?" I heard one say. That "'ah" and "ar" is Cockney as it is not spoken out of Limehouse. But he meant it for Australia.

Of course comparisons were in the air. Not that there was any fair chance of comparing. The British sailors were behaving splendidly. But the American was out for a holiday. As for intelligence, the British sailor is not at all on the surface. He is unquestionably a highly-trained man; and it would be quite unsafe to judge, because he does not take you into his confidence about his work, that he does not think about it.

I would one could tell more of those four crowded, rather riotous, exceedingly interesting days. But they have been told and retold too often.

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It may have been a colder puff through the port. Or perhaps we went astern, when the crisp bubbles would come floating past. For the bunk is high up on one of the chests of drawers. Fresh sea gusts and sounds of harbour or ocean sweep over you at night; and you can always look out by simply sitting up in bed.

Whatever it was, it did not wake me thoroughly; but just so as to be conscious of a familiar scrub, scrub, scrub down in the cabin. To-day's suit being brushed; more softly than with a kitten's pad, for fear of rousing someone a moment earlier than necessary. When you arrive on a man-o'-war to stay for a while,

you will find that, within the few hospitable minutes generally taken to reach your cabin, your baggage is there before you. Someone, some wonder, has found his way about your shirts, collars, stud-boxes, razors, evening ties. They are staring at you from the bunk, with your shoes below and hot water panting in a brass jug by the washstand inviting you to dress for dinner. The rest of your furniture is packed into drawers, lockers; ranged along shelves or boot-racks, pretending shamelessly to have been there for months. A friend in need, a certain invaluable marine (for some of them may add this duty to their others in return for a small consolation) receives you, takes you in; nurses, feeds, advises you; keeps you up to time, turns you out more or less presentable for breakfast, lunch, and tea (there were sandwiches and soft drinks waiting in your cabin if you were kept ashore very late); is a father, a brother, a fairy godmother to you for the better part of six weeks; and lands you safely in the end, with hair parted and belongings packed, on Man-o'-war Steps, Sydney. Scrub, scrub, scrub. When clothes and boots were laid out; when shaving water stood steaming, and the tiny bath, which hangs from the ceiling through the day, was hooked down and dumped with about 16 others in the alleyway outside, and filled; when there was just sufficient time left to break the dressing record in ——; then, and not till then, he would wake you. Now there were tub and shaving water not ready yet. Therefore it was the breeze or the bubbles woke me.

However, remembering presently to have heard, on coming aboard at 4 that morning after sending a last batch of cables from Auckland, that we were to sail at breakfast-time for Sydney, I volunteered dreamily; "We'll be shoving off soon, Quinlan?"

"Anchor's off the ground now, sir."

Is it, though! Now one thought of it, there was a wriggle in the ship. I sat up, rubbed my eyes, looked out. It was not a sight to be missed.

We were slipping down a long harbour in the

early morning. Through the porthole, across a smooth, steaming harbour surface, one could see H.M.S. Pioneer, which had lain beside us for a week, disappearing round our stern. A white stern-post slipped on to the picture —two enormous black guns, a mountain of complicated buff upperworks, three slender buff funnels, tipped with black, lazily smoking, two more huge guns and a white bow. So their flagship, the Connecticut, one of the most famous ships on the sea, slid past the port, quite close, like a round scene thrown by magic lantern. Up there, hanging over each rail, was a line of fair-haired, loosely-clad American boys, Jackies and marines, their tunics loose at the throat, their caps recklessly cocked to show their long forelocks—smoking, chewing, spitting into the harbour. For a mile and a half down-stream stretched a lane of white battleships, in two lines curving a little with the fairway. Very quietly and without fuss we were slipping along it. The furthest down harbour were still in the mist.

The anchor must have been off the ground this five minutes. Probably we left early to avoid unnecessary ceremonial, turning the seamen on 16 ships out from their breakfasts or their brasswork to line the decks; keeping the full guard of marines to attention along the quarterdeck. It was not 8 o'clock yet. They were not officially awake. At 8 the flag goes up on every warship in every harbour. The band, if there is one, plays the National Anthem. If a foreign warship is there, too, the band plays that country's Anthem—after its own, of course. There are limits to the politeness of ships. Perhaps there are to the politeness of the drawing-room; but they are less obvious. No self-respecting warship, for example, gives up the best chair—her own berth—to any visitor, unless the visitor has come in first and taken it. So your own Anthem comes before anything. For the last week there has reached one from overhead about shaving time "God Save the King," followed by "The Star-spangled Banner"; and from far up and down

the water a dozen bands fighting one another like the pianos at a girls' school over the "Star-spangled Banner," followed by "God Save the King."

But at this hour they are not officially showing off; nor are we. We are going early to save them the trouble. Yet we seem to be moving very fast. One could swear that, under the eyes of sixteen American battleships, we take good care to up-anchor and slip down the narrow lane exactly twice as neatly and quickly as is necessary. Why not? The more we care how we look, the better for us. The man the British Navy does not want, is the man who doesn't care.

One felt strangely proud of the old ship as she swung quietly out under Rangitoto to the open. Their white and buff fleet might be second in the world—first in the Pacific. We in Australia had never seen anything like it or approaching it. And any one ship could have blown the Powerful out of the water. But after all this ship, only one ship, and not a very strong ship at that, was representative in these parts of the Navy of navies; the great grey force, swift and silent, with which, though it be at the other end of the world, every navy must reckon; and with which no navy—no two navies—can reckon.

. . . *The Dreadnought has no medium guns.* . . .

Chapter XII.

THE GUNS.

Somewhere in the mud on the sea-bottom over which the Powerful is floating lies a ship which she was built to fight. The Rurik happened upon the Japanese in the cruiser action of the late war, and never got back to Vladivostock. My lords built the Powerful larger, steadier, three knots faster, able to stay longer away; protected their gun crews with 6 in. steel casemates, but their ship with nothing except 6 in. steel deck and some coal-bunkers. The Russians left the men exposed, but gave a little waterline-belt to the ship, and built her with six more guns. That is the way of British shipbuilding. Our ships are called weak. There is a Chilian ship the same age as the Powerful, faster, gunned as strongly, armoured—

and half the size. But then my lords build ships first; and fortresses afterwards.

This is a weak ship, having only twice the guns of Sydney fortress. Every Friday we have fought a battle. Every Friday every ship in the Navy fights a battle. The Powerful would have arrived on a Friday morning into the quiet of Suva Harbour. But there was that battle to fight; so she slowed down overnight, fought in the morning, and sailed in after lunch.

There is no unnecessary blood about Friday morning battles—no live shells and cordite. They loaded practice shell, especially striped to save mistakes; swung the old bow gun round—solemn and slow; ducked it, chucked it under the chin; received the range from the tops; fired a tube in every gun to see the gun circuits were correct; reported that the gun would not sulk when it was really wanted; for the rest—pretended to fire or misfire; hauled shell from below—did anything else the imagination suggested; and finally clamped all taut again.

It was old, old practice to them. But they did some gruesomely suggestive things. The surgeons went somewhere near the bottom of the ship to wait out of harm's way till there were no shells to hurt them, but awful work to do. The watertight doors were closed; the deadlights—steel caps to the portholes—shut. The ship was like night within, ward-room, gun-room, cabins all stifling close. You had to switch on the electric light if you wanted to see. Not only that. At Tsushima the Russians found shells boring the ship, exploding inside and catching gun crews in the back. So now every Friday the crews in the casemates, which are armoured rooms along both sides with a 6 in. gun in each, have to keep the armoured door behind them shut. It is rather perfunctory. But some day, when all is smoke, scuttle, strain, these men will have stood three hundred times where they will stand; and done what they will do.

There are battles far more thorough than those Friday ones; ferocious shooting with the ship's whole heart behind it. Shooting is a new art in the Navy. Not long since, gun practice was held a nasty, grimy, unnecessary business, almost as bad as coaling. Ammunition is actually known to have been thrown over the side rather than that the guns should be dirtied. When gunners did let fly they missed very often. It was thought impossible to do much better. Ten years ago the Spaniards shot out a terrific hail on the Americans, and did no damage at all. Some books say the Americans shot brilliantly. Two American officers smiled the other day when I told them so. But in that year there was a certain small Scylla in the Mediterranean, which had the luck to be commanded by an optimist. The Admiralty did not worry about telescopic sights and such fallals. So with the pride of a young commander he bought them himself; and the Scylla made an apparently impossible record, which many people frankly suggested to have been faked. The same captain, one Percy Scott, went afterwards to the Terrible in China, and she beat the Scylla hands down. Other China ships copied him and did the same. He is Rear-Admiral now. His flagship Good Hope holds the record.

The American ships were crowded with Sir Percy Scott's tricks for the teaching of shooting. Some even practice with them every day. "There's one thing we think we can do—that's shoot," said one of their officers to me. "We have to thank your Percy Scott for that. All Navies followed him." Indeed, Captain Scott worked hand in hand with an American officer. Amongst other things they thrashed out a rod called a "dotter," which, when you aim the gun at different squares on a target hung just outside the gun-port, darts forward and dots the spot you would have hit.

So warships are always shooting nowadays without even soiling the guns. They are always firing,

too, not exactly with the guns, but through them. This flagship on Monday stopped in mid-ocean; put a little square of canvas over the side, steamed round it, and riddled it with screaming small shot. A fixed number of real shells will tear the vitals out of any big gun. So they are only fired at certain special practice. For the rest, short tubes are fixed inside the bigger guns, and one inch projectiles fired through them. After an hour we went our way again.

And now see the thoroughness of the Navy. It is not enough to practise shooting in the day because real shooting may have to be done at night. So, well on into the same night we dropped two more targets; lost them, and searched, searched, searched almost to desperation till we found them about a mile out upon the black water, with the ship's two staring eyes turned on them in the dark; lashed the sea with small shot into ghostly geysers around them, picked them up, and steamed away. Even that does not satisfy. This far-off sea battle may not be fought in smooth water. So at times they wait for a heavy sea; and then go out and shoot with the ship's deck waving like a tree-top. They even shoot in harbour. You sometimes notice from the ferry a grey box about the size of a flower-pot, which each 6 in. gun stares into like a mirror. They fire small bullets into those from tubes laid along the guns.

Some call them too thorough, at times; as, for example, when the Viper piled herself on a Channel Island by running twenty knots through fog. Manœuvres without lights, too — a friend of mine for'ard had no palate for such excitement. Lord Charles Beresford constantly practises the Channel Fleet without lights — "they call 'im Deadlight Charlie, sir." The metal ports are shut, shade pulled over deck lights. The only light for the next astern to steer by is a little hooded one at the stern, which shows reflected dimly in the wake. Men tell you how one black night, when something long and black was passing through the shade, something else

close by made a wrong turn of the wheel—brought the two together; and it was found that the Tiger had been rammed by a companion, her plates—an eighth of an inch thick at best—crushed like an egg-shell; most of her men crushed with them.

Twice in the year come the great gun tests, one for the whole ship, one for the different gunners. The ship has been practising all the year, in some of the fleets practising every day, to fight that one test against the rest of the Navy. At the end of it all, just for two or three minutes, as she steams in the wake of another ship, she may let fly. For that minute or two in all the year the ship lives through a real sea fight—flings on to the target every shell her gunners can rush into their pieces. Another ship lies near the target to mark the shooting. And the shooting is such as was thought utterly impossible ten years ago. The target has been cut down by half; the hits are enormously increased. Even in the last three years the average points made have gone from 98 to 194. In the other great trial—the gunlayers' test—each gun fires separately, so that they may mark the work of each gunner. Some years ago a sensation was made when a certain petty officer fired eight shots in one minute, all hits. Over fifty men have made eight hits since; and some eleven. The Americans have done the same. This is the ladder which since 1898—the Scylla's year—the average hits in each 100 shots has climbed in our Navy: 31, 31, 32, 36, 41, 46, 42, 56, 71, 79.

All of which is only the result of incessant making ready in peace for a war that may never come. Like all efficiency, it is largely the result of punishment and reward to gunners, gunnery lieutenants, even captains, direct and prompt. If a ship does well there are reports to the great office in London to show who did it; if badly, the Admiralty wants to know a good reason, or someone suffers. From that firm, instant decision there are no

. . . For two or three minutes in the year she may let fly. . . .
(The powder with which these big guns are being fired is 'smokeless.')

Boards of Appeal. The Navy is not weak-kneed, with Courts of Review. My lords are good friends to their servants; but they are quite absolute. It is the only way.

A 7 in. gun is an ungainly pet. But the eyes of one Jacky grew very soft the other day as he slapped one fat barrel on the Louisiana. "She holds a world's record," he said. I forget what it was—every second gun did; but it was certainly very good, and he was a proud man. He fondled that cold steel contour as you might a woolly lamb. Naval men talk in surprising analogies. They tell you how, now that slow-burning, smokeless powder is used, which gives the shell a gradual push, the guns have to be made long, so as to allow that gentle shove to have its full effect. The slowness and gentleness of the powder consists in starting that shell off at about a mile a second; its smokelessness may be judged from the picture on the opposite page. The armour the shell has to pierce is faced so hard that soft spots have to be specially left for boring rivet-holes. The shell must be pointed to bore it; but its hardness splits the fine point of the shell. So they tell you that they cap the shell with some soft substance, which will flatten like india-rubber around the shell when it strikes, and hold it together whilst it bores the first inch. The wonderful machine known as an armour-piercing shell will not split then; it will go through and burst the $\frac{3}{100}$th of a second later, exactly in the ship's inside. Their soft substance is wrought-iron. From the softness and slowness of the British battleship, from its smokelessness and gentleness, from its elephantine playfulness, may a merciful providence deliver us!

They are treacherous pets at times, are the guns. Every year or so on some ship, when they are slamming the breech-block to, in the infinitesimal space before the screw of it engages, there is a pale flash; and the smoke clears, leaving the better part of a gun's crew quite motionless on the deck. The Americans have suffered dreadfully that way. They seldom find

the cause. But to make sure in these new ships here, they have closed every turret, so that when the crew enters it to fire, and shuts the door and the lid, it is as near as can be in a hermetically-sealed box. Air, they say, is pumped into the turret from below, so that the moment the breech of the gun is opened, a rush of wind finds its way out of it so strong as to clear the gun of fumes and to carry your cap with it if you hold it near the breech. Not only that, but into the breech itself is let a small pipe, through which air is pumped to a pressure of 120 lbs. It opens automatically when the breech does, and blows its jet of air down the barrel. Even so, they say, every time the gun fires, something looking like a sheet of flame flashes back 12 inches through the breech.

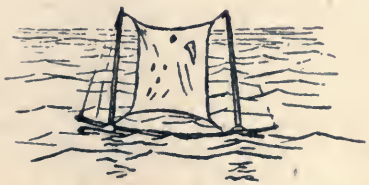
It is rather disquieting to find these American ships so full of means to save labour; overhead railways on which ashes run to the side; four separate ways by which the little crowd in the tops, who for some years have had to take the angle of the range, can tell those at the guns the distance. Down the mast to each gun goes (1) a telephone; (2) a voice-tube; (3) a wire to a dial; (4) a wire to a set of glass letters, with electric light at the back of each, called a vigil. In your frescos of the next Trafalgar two at each gun will wear telephone receivers over their ears.

It is the small guns that get on people's nerves; the same that fire salutes. There is no tremendous noise in these tight-sealed turrets; nor any dreadful concussion. True, when the wall has been struck from outside, men leaning against it have been stunned. But the dangerous concussion comes for'ard of the gun, when it fires past another gun's crew. The reason why the Dreadnought has no medium guns is that they cannot be tucked out of the way.

Deep down in all warships is a room of wheels, pipes, tubes, where the torpedoes live. They practise with them occasionally — even run past another squadron, fire soft-nosed torpedoes at it, and look if any nose is crumpled when they pick it up. But they

are dangerous friends, apt to meander in a circle and come home on the ship's stern.

There is one last missile which, even if the gunners and torpedo-men were all gone, the bridge and the engine-room, working together, have been given to use in emergencies. It is the heaviest missile known. When the fight comes close, and everything goes wrong, and hope gradually flickers and dies out, and they know themselves sinking, and there is just a chance of dragging someone else down with them,—then they may fling the ship herself at the enemy. That is how a warship comes by her ram bows. But they are building them like liners now.



. . . *We put a little square of canvas over the side.* . . .

Chapter XIII.

THE TEST.

If one were asked what thing more than any other had impressed one during a month's cruise on a British warship, there would be no hesitation about the answer. It is this constant preparation at more or less high tension for a dimly-distant battle—a battle that is most unlikely to arrive during the life of this ship. With the big fleets that tension is several times higher, because ship is pitted against ship in an eternal game. The men, on the whole, enjoy the fever of that game, in spite of its strenuousness. You know it, because they have told you as much outright.

One is bound to confess that it has not always been so. It is not long that the Navy has lived on tenterhooks. But in its present temper it will be so more and more every day. The good British citizen may have doubted his Parliament and his glorious Constitution, his Army, and even his Church. But to doubt the Navy was and is sacrilege. It is no use shirking the fact that there have been times when it was just as well no foreigner undeceived him. There was a time, not ten years since, when appearances were a great deal more sought after in the Navy than they are now. The public does not know much about how a ship is to win the next sea fight; but it does know when a

ship looks pretty and painted and neat, and when it sees such a one it claps its hands. About the public a commander may not care over-much. But he does care when the commanders of other ships grow green with envy; and that reward is to be had for the trouble of winning it any day. There is another reward, which is only to be had by long years of unpretentious work—which may probably never be had at all. At least it is years and years ahead in the precarious future, when the great grey war-dog moves fast through a fog of its own making, with its teeth bared and its lips curled back, and the dregs of the last explosion oozing from its reeking gun-muzzles. It may be that a ship will never even have a chance of proving what it can do in that awful trial; or, if it does, that not even the rest of the fleet, much less the crowd on shore, will ever know of it. But that sea fight after all is the reward which the ship is there to win. And some years ago there were those in authority who determined that the Navy should set scientifically preparing to win sea fights, and not to look pretty; and should practise everything that pertained or related to or in any distant way bore upon what a sea fight was likely to be—and that at high pressure, night and day, and whether or no anyone that slaved his eyes out in the practice was or was not ever likely to see, hear, or smell even so much as the outside of a sea fight before he died. And by way of making the true reward for this preparation more present, that Admiralty ordered that confidential reports should be sent to it of the work of each young officer; and it rewards and punishes them without ceremony according as that work is good or bad.

The consequence is that the ships of 1908 are not painted more pretty than a new petticoat. They do not glitter and shine and sparkle in quite the same way as ten years before. But it is the sober truth—which few outside of the Navy dream of, and no one inside of it thinks of denying—that for doing the work of a sea fight the Navy of 1908 as far excels that of 1898 as an engineer excels a rockchopper. The details of it—how half the ships in the Navy,

when they shoot at a thing, hit it so often as was thought quite impossible for any ship a few years back; how they can stow their coal and ammunition, one bidding against another, in a time that was undreamed of; how they have spread and fastened their awning in the Channel Fleet in ten seconds, and cleared the ship for action, or had out their nets, or moored their ships, where a year or two back they would have been looking round to begin; how, in short, they live with the sea fight always in mind, where before they thought only of the ship,—these are bald, plain facts, at which the public is not startled simply because it does not know them.

It is only once, or it may be twice, in this very modern history that there has been a chance of seeing what such a constant preparing would mean when the real test came. The British Navy has not fought a battle for over a hundred years. It is about the only modern Navy which has never been at war. That is because no one has cared to go to war with it. It is out and away the best example of keeping at peace by preparing for war. But there have been just one or two occasions in recent times when the peace of two great nations trembled in the balance. How close Britain came to war, few Englishmen realised except those that were at the very brunt of the trouble — along the very edge of the nation's defences, the friction-point, as it were; who saw with their eyes things which the nation heard only long afterwards, scrap by scrap, in the newspapers. Just once or twice at such times, in the hours when it was not known what sort of a struggle the week might not bring forth, the curtain has been raised. And it has been given to a few men to judge, by a hint here and there, what will be the fitness of this modern British Navy when the test does come.

It was some four years since that a mail-steamer on which the writer happened to sail turned in to Gibraltar and found the eight battleships of the Channel Fleet, under Lord Charles Beresford, lying alongside the mole. In the offing was a single grey cruiser, with steam up; like a cat on the watch night

and day; just keeping place against the current. Only a fortnight before, a single half-hour's foolish work upon the waters had brought England and another Power suddenly into holts. The rest of the story is common property. But I never heard it until the other day.

At that time, to a British squadron in the Gulf of Venice there had come a hurried wire from London. The ships were to proceed to Malta with all speed, fill up with coal and ammunition, and sail wherever ordered. In four days from then the cruisers of that squadron were out of the Straits and steaming up the shores of a different sea altogether. The newspapers never told us how it was done. But those who were there say they never saw men work as those crews worked through a night and a few hours of day in Malta. They were the same crews that had coaled and ammunitioned ship a dozen times before, sweating in practice against the records of other ships. But this time, they say, when minutes might be needed in earnest, they fairly flung themselves on the coal-sacks, worked as their officers had not imagined men could work; like devils, they said, not men.

Four days later, when the four cruisers steamed into a certain harbour in the Atlantic, they learned that their bird had flown. A foreign fleet had called there. It had sailed the day before. The cruisers turned immediately and swept down the ocean full speed on a long curve of search. That night as they hurried through the darkness, every deck cleared for action, every gun crew sleeping by its gun, a blinding, shimmering eye was suddenly turned on them out of the blackness. They had come right on top of their quarry.

After that they took station, one at each corner of the other fleet; and in this position, with teeth bared and every hair bristling, shepherded it down the coast until it was out of harm's way. Nothing came of it all. The battleships we saw along the mole

never got the word for which they waited. And the strange fleet went on its way to come by a belated fate at other hands, and in quite other waters.

No, the guns of our modern ships and all the grim apparatus of war, though they have been brought up to the scratch once or twice, have never yet seen that shadowy sea fight which is the end of it all. For which Providence, which in this helps those who for years and years have been at real pains to help themselves, may be thanked. For all that, its shadow is hanging over the Navy all the time.

Not a week ago the flagship lay under a beautiful starlit sky in a beautiful tropical harbour, the water smooth, deep, restful, shining as black satin, the lights of a small town rather over a mile away, most of the ward-room on shore, and the remainder amusing itself getting bait for its fishing by shooting with a revolver at such small fry as came into the green circle under the gangway light. One could not help thinking of the day when these same grey sides will be rushing in upon a hunt less innocent. There are times on such a ship as this when one comes as it were round a corner suddenly face to face with the grim purpose for which it is all meant. I shall not forget one day after the call to quarters had sounded catching sight of a man in an out-of-the-way corner of the ship waiting there alone, rather bored, until the watertight doors were opened and he could go on deck again. There was his place when the real day came, down there by himself, with the steel doors sealed at his side, and the trap in the armoured deck through which he came slammed and fastened above his head. All that he would know of the fight would be what he could guess from the roar and the shudder, the strange thrills and hammerings above. And if the end of it all came and the deck canted steeper and steeper, was he there like a rat in a trap? I asked him afterwards and he took me to a small round cover on the poop,

set like a coal-trap in a London pavement, just behind the big gun. It covered the narrow tube, leading somewhere down into the dark interior, through which shells are hoisted to the gun's crew. "If it ever comes to abandon ship," he said, "when the call is sounded, the gun's crew lets a ladder down that hoist for me to climb up." And if by that time the tube is all battered and buckled and red hot in parts and stifling with smoke, or the gun's crew knocked stupid —well, he would have to invent some other way, just like the men down in the engine-room and dozens of others.

There came upon one as a shock then for the first time that this vague, speculative sea fight which we amuse ourselves with imagining is a living, personal question for these men. Every man knows to three-quarters of an inch the precise square of deck upon which he would be standing—upon which he may be standing a month hence. And each has his own little set of problems which cannot help suggesting themselves at those odd lonely times when we do think of unpleasant things. Perhaps Tom Smith's station is in one of the tops—those little round roof gardens that sprout at intervals up the fat masts of big warships. The tops stood well during a great battle in this ocean of ours some years since. But a mast is sure to go some day. When it does lurch tenderly against the funnel, with the fiery tongues and fumes from an inferno beneath roaring up it; when it totters away and crashes over the side into the sea—a steel mast, mind you, not one to float—what will Thomas do? He has thought it all out for himself, lying on his bunk some sleepless night, or on the bridge in the quiet of the middle watch. He has made up his mind what he will do. He has a plan for swarming up the nearest stay on to the deck—a rather pathetic plan really, for there's not one chance in a thousand that he could do it. But—well, even the most desperate of plans is some sort of a comfort.

It is all a great guess, for two modern battle

fleets have never met on an equality yet. Everyone knows that it will begin at 10,000 to 6,000 yards, and that he who hits first—not necessarily he who shoots first—wins. Who hits first depends upon who first gets the range. So, as soon as the grey, smoking toys on the horizon come well in view, there will be a sort of suppressed fever among the little bunches of heads in the tops, which have to work out their distance. All the while around the lean barrels below and in the gun-hoods will be groups of men, shivering with the excitement of waiting — that cold, sickening excitement that douches one before a football match like an icy bath. A wait that drags on, aches positively—and then the brass speaking-tube gurgles and squeaks like a phonograph. A clean bell rings. A dial hand moves. A roar, a shudder—and the first shot is on its way.

It is rather a frightening shudder, they say, that the ship gives when her biggest guns are fired, more frightening than the noise of them. The wrench to the hull must be enormous. Her two turret guns, fired right ahead, nearly stopped the Duncan dead. Yet the Dreadnought has fired all her ten monsters at once and been unhurt. There was a Russian battleship once that went out from Sebastopol into the Black Sea to fire her guns. She never came back. But then, half of her bolts were of putty, and you could run your knife down the seams in her decks before ever she went to sea. What proportion of the money that was voted for rivets was keeping full certain noble wine-cellars is not exactly known.

The first shot is on its way. It is high time for the captain to get to his conning-tower crouched there low under the forward bridge. A ship goes into fire without a soul on her bridge; her forehead bare, as it were. There must be a strange, deserted look about her. She will be to all appearance an empty model. There will be none of the familiar little notches that you see against the sky above the handrail of the upper works; not a hand or a head to be seen; only

bare sides and decks and platforms and some strange internal power guiding and swinging the ship. It has been proved that the bridge is no place for anyone in a modern fight. Even the conning-tower, a cramped, round-shaped coop with steel walls a foot thick, tucked snugly back into the shadow of the bridge, is hardly fit place for the brain of the ship. The conning-tower comes in for a most awful hail of shell, nowadays; especially in the leading ship. You must take every mean advantage that offers in a modern war. So the Admiral's ship comes in for a most terrible punishment—whether she wins or loses—on the off chance of killing the Admiral. When the Japanese fought the Russians at Tsushima, in this ocean, it was the two ships at the head of the Russian squadrons—the flagships—that were first crumpled up by gun-fire. When they were gone, the Japanese smashed in the two which took their place. It is known that the concentrated fire received on each of those ships in turn was dreadful beyond imagination.

So on this particular day the bridge is clear. If the Admiral were aboard, Heaven knows where he had better go—perhaps on the lee side of the tower. But he is on the flagship ahead. The fire control is already in the tops, and the navigator is with the captain. The big guns are roaring continuously now, our own and others. Presently the secondary guns begin to bark, and several great invisible things crash somewhere amidships. You hardly notice it, for you are working like a lunatic; but a faint smell of burning wood oozes through into the casemates. It cannot be from the cabins, for all the woodwork, bunks, drawers, partitions, boxes, tables were chopped away with axes and thrown overboard last night; and the boats—God help you if she sinks—were left out on the ocean yesterday. Probably it is a piece of ripped deck. You realise that the ship is getting a warm time of it behind your back there. The fore funnel must have crashed into the sea, leaving a roaring crater in the deck; for dense coal smoke and flame

come rolling, rushing flat along the deck, curling and licking into corners, here and there catching a man and shrivelling him like a scorched ant. The after funnel is making life unlivable in the tops with its rich fumes. The deck is on fire in at least six places, and the watermains are mostly cut. You can hear the swish of water on the lower deck, either from the hoses or through some shot-hole. The crew of the aftermost 6 in. gun are walking foolishly around their casement because the big guns fired at an angle past them, and they do not yet quite realise where they are. There are the forms of men laid along the sides and in the corners of the casemates, because there is not a ghost of a chance of taking them elsewhere. The surgeons are in their proper places in action—and as cruel a place as any—as deep down in the ship as may be, out of harm's way, waiting—waiting—waiting that they may be there when their work comes—afterwards; with a cool brain and steady hand. Not a wound may they probe or an artery bind during the fight itself.

You are whirling round corners now at 17 knots, just 250 yards behind the flagship. There is an officer keeping distance in the conning-tower. It is his part to stand, with his sextant in hand, rigidly correcting that waving, seething interval, without time to worry about anything else. He can do it because he has done it on foggy nights in the Atlantic, and a thousand other days and nights besides. What chance would the man have in that hour who had not practised, practised, practised till it was second nature? Your practice is being tested with a vengeance.

Ten minutes after the ship seems to wander a little. Somebody whose business it is guesses what has happened—and finds no one standing in the conning-tower at all. Even a box, with 12-inch steel walls, cannot make sure against the hail that is poured on that particular corner. The chance of one shell, small or big, going home is too great altogether. But it does not stop the routine of the

. . . *That evening. left far out upon the old grey sea.* . . .

ship for an instant. From the moment when the command falls from one it is taken up automatically by another, somewhere in the ship. There is an intricate scheme, by which everyone knows who takes charge if others go; if the tops carry over the side, if those in the conning-tower are "washed out," if the Admiral is hit, or a casemate is cleared.

All this time deep in the ship there go quietly about their work the men on whom the ship depends for her life; fighting Trafalgar, with an oil-can in one hand and a piece of waste in the other; giving a knot or two here or there, just as it is asked for from above; oiling, scraping, rigging, patching—anything to keep the ship a normal ship, her head cool and her limbs free.

So the battle goes, one way or the other; and a thousand years of history is made in a day. That evening left far out on the old grey sea is a sick warship—weary to death, heavy-eyed; with hand to heart, as it were, labouring heavily on its side. The fight has gone by long since, hull down, and over the horizon. The Admiral left her, perforce, to keep pace with it. She has laboured so far alone, desperately straining to reach a distant harbour; and all alive for a peril that she fears, but cannot see—the awful, swift jackals of the sea wandering through the night. Someone raises an alarm, and two bright blue pencils of light stream from her and wander nervously round the sea like the eyes of a frightened snail. They will see her now, for sure, even over the horizon. Ten minutes, twenty minutes—what was that white thing that slipped into the beams and suddenly winced in the light? Flash, flash, flash—she has fight in her still, the monster. But it is too late now, for they are there, a dozen of them, in at the death, as the hounds worry a dying stag.

Seeing how hard, how desperately hard, it is to find anything with a searchlight; and how much harder it will be to find everything, and to hit it when found; and seeing that if the water is smooth it takes a destroyer just ten minutes to reach you from the

horizon—it does seem that at such times the chances are very strongly with the destroyer. The battleship's best friend has so far generally been that mistiming and losing, and general muddling up of oneself and others, that is usually incidental to a night attack. Some destroyers come in, looking like a battered bowler hat, about once a fortnight in England; or with her bows neatly folded and stuck down like a tin envelope. And for each one so buckled, every sub-lieutenant can tell you of a hundred hairbreadth escapes. But even so they do get where they want—sometimes. With rivals as skilled in this game as are the Germans, it is unsafe to count on miscarriage. The most attractive plan is to set a thief to catch a thief, and use torpedo-boat destroyers to destroy torpedo-boats. One must hope that when the sun goes down on a brave fight, and a stricken ship is alone upon the seas, there may be one or two faithful watchdogs to spare to keep their master from those jackals that prowl by night.

The pity of it, that there is no ship upon every sea—no fair white lady of the Red Cross to stand by a stricken crew at a time like that. Their boats are over the horizon where they left them yesterday; every stick of wood is on the waters; and what hope is there from an iron hull? They are quite ready to sink. But their ship is dead—what more can be wanted? They have fought a great fight to the end of the day, and—ought not every fleet to take with it one or two such sisters of mercy, to nurse it in peace and succour it in war? Our Navy, with all its fleets, has one hospital ship, given to it by American ladies. The American Government has another—would not accept the free gift, but bought the whole ship for a dollar. Most navies have none.

So the great day comes and goes. It is all a huge guess; and, on the whole, by the experience of the Japanese war, the British seem to have guessed pretty right. By their latest guess they built the Dreadnought. And though many doubt whether it is wise to build ships so big, with guns all very large or very small, and nothing between, that is being altered in others. No

one claims that the Navy is perfect. Its ships must be a compromise, after all. They must be able to go anywhere for any time, in any weather, and they cannot be everything else as well. If it comes to a fight, they may pray to fight, driving, teeth on, into a gale; with certain other ships more heavily armed and armoured ducking and bobbing on their bow.

As for the men, no one dreams them infallible either. They are only engaged in a very strenuous, unprejudiced endeavour to make themselves so. The naval officer does not underrate his rivals, and he will tell you frankly that the German *personnel*, at any rate, is very hard to beat. One cannot help thinking that, even given equality otherwise, there is one thing that will tell very heavily on the British side in a day of stress—and that is the very happy regard of the officers for the men, and the men for their officers. In truth there exists there, deep down below the forms of discipline and convention, a feeling of mutual respect that comes very near to friendship. It is a friendship which exists in no foreign service that one knows of. And one can imagine the close of a long day, when it will be more precious than either guns or armour.

It has been suggested Australia should build or buy scouts.

Chapter XIV.

THE FLAGSHIP OF THE FUTURE.

It was a fascinating dream. It was a dream of Sydney Harbour, all a hazy, mellow orange under the dying sun, with one long, even bar of grey-blue cloud —the sort of grey you could paint in faded ink stains against a salmon-coloured blotting pad—along over the western hills; with a mighty Australian flagship, all one hazy grey, smoking her evening pipe lazily in the foreground, a dozen small tenders, pinnaces, gigs busying themselves about her waist, and the seven other grey hulls of the China Squadron in a dim line towards the Heads behind her. A great Admiral—one whose name goes for more in the courts of the world than a Prime Minister in the old time—has brought the Australian-China fleet back for its yearly trip to the home harbours. In a day or two it will slip in the early morning down the long lane of water, with the band of the flagship playing and the colours flying, and out and out and hull down—a smudge of

brown soot along the skyline. And the city will know that its brothers or cousins have gone with their ships a week or so to Wellington, and then back for ten months of deadly earnest around the Straits and Hong-kong and Wei-hai-wei. The destroyers of the fleet are just then in Singapore. The cruiser squadron, with the exception of one ship re-fitting in Port Stephens, and one left last week in Melbourne, has been signalled to join at Auckland.

Now, it is very easy to dream. And one is not going to say that picture is beyond Australians. Because they are Anglo-Saxons; and anything that can be done, the Anglo-Saxon stock can do. But it is worth while to reckon up what it means.

The least thing is expense — and that is big enough, too. If Australia were to buy herself a fleet of the same size in proportion to her people as the British fleet, she would need five battleships, costing about £7,000,000; four big cruisers, £4,000,000; eight smaller ones, £1,600,000; and some 34 torpedo craft, about £2,000,000. That is to say, Australia would spend £14,600,000 on ships alone to start fair; and to get the ships for that price would have to go to the cheapest market for building ships, which is the Clyde. Even London rents and rates are of late too dear for its shipbuilding firms, and they have melted to the North. If the Australian warship were built in Australia, as it certainly would be in the end, it would cost a quarter as much again. Dockyards and arsenals, slips and caissons, wharfs, shears, barracks, stores, and the rest are not even reckoned in this cost. Probably an Australian Navy in proportion to Australian population would cost at this day nothing under £25,000,000 for a start. Then Australia would have a navy a third as strong as the Japanese. You could not buy the English fleet, works and all, for £250,000,000.

It would cost £25,000,000 to start with; and it would cost over £4,000,000 every year to keep up. That is for to-day. When the population was

8,000,000 it would cost £8,000,000. Come what may, this country must look it in the face, that each ship in an Australian fleet would be more expensive to build, each man in it more expensive to pay, than in the Royal Navy. The pay of the men to-day would be £700,000 by English rates. But to induce Australians to join they must be paid a rate which would work out to £1,200,000 at the least. When some people talk of the naval "tribute" of £200,000 as a burden, they can surely not realise that if every Australian were paying for his fleet what every Englishman pays, Australia's yearly bill would now be from £3,500,000 to £4,000,000. The million and a bit which Mr. Deakin proposes to spend on his new and improved Army and Navy taken altogether does not amount to a fraction of it.

The expense is the least difficulty, because, though none of us like taxes, still if the Australian himself out of his innermost longings wanted it badly enough, he would find another £1 a head mighty quick. It might be a miserable hamper for a growing country, from which England yet saves us. But if it is necessary the money is there. *The* difficulty, the difficulty of all, would certainly be in a small and jealously local Navy to keep up that constant straining to be ready—that constant, honest, intelligent effort which is growing day by day in the British fleets—or, indeed, anything like it. There is nothing one can think of in any way approaching that aching tension in any of the public services—most certainly not in the Australian Post Office; not in the Army—not even in the Railways. It is partly that the Navy has awakened these last years, along with the rest of England, out of the sleep of those who have too much of the good things of the earth; and it is partly that in the melting-pot of a very huge service some three or four men have come to the top of such sort as had the ability to set their standard on the Navy. A Fisher or Beresford or Scott is a man who may possibly exist in every million, but is rarely found out. We talk glibly of the deplorable

lack of great commanders in these days, because we do not recognise that it is a rare thing for the world to have even one great commander in it at a time. One single Wilson may not be evolved from a nation in a century. It may be the Admiralty is no more than a sound, progressive, modern institution; that it gets no more than a good, honest, average day's work from its sailors. The point is that the mere fact of being a sound, progressive public office; of showing the way, on the whole, to Europe, America, and Asia; of being first into new fields when you may render £250,000,000 worth of steel obsolete in the old one; of getting an honest day's work out of public servants at all, and continuing to get it indefinitely, not scamped but thorough even where it does not show, when the reward of it all may be a hundred and fifty years beyond the horizon—this is a wonder in itself.

For the Admiralty is progressive. It is, the exception to the rule that for unconquerable drowsiness, for a hopeless oppression like a hot summer afternoon and a heavy lunch, the English public office is the symbol. Again and again, where they judged some invention worthy the risk, my lords have jumped into the dark, staked millions upon it. This very Powerful was one of the jumps. Some Frenchman had invented a boiler in which water, instead of being held in a heavy canister which took hours to thaw, ran in hundreds of little tubes and boiled in twenty minutes. The Admiralty tried them in two gunboats; then, all in one jump, put them into its two precious cruisers, Powerful and Terrible. For they were famous, mighty cruisers then. An American officer told me how he met this ship first. He was one of a hundred boys on a training ship. They turned early one morning into Plymouth, and brought up underneath the towering black sides of what seemed to him, looking up, a monster of a ship. They all knew her by reputation,—with her new Belleville boilers, portentous speed and size. He said that, boy-like, he prayed inwardly that he might some day

come to command a ship like that. The two cost over £1,400,000. The Admiralty staked it on the water-tube boiler; and won. Europe followed.

To-day my lords are thinking of turning battleships into motor-boats without smoke, steam, or coal. They have two small engines already. France jumped first at the submarine; the Admiralty had to follow with a sprint. If it comes to airships, my lords must take the air first and keep it for their own. There is no stopping in this race. It is never-ending tension. There was time to sit down once—twenty years ago. The change is simply that the Admiralty has been caught from that dreamy, dark backwater where the British public offices sleepily revolve, and swept into the mid-current of modern progress. Pray heaven it will never get out. For once it stops to look round, to smile complacently at itself as this book is doing, it is lost. A great mind constantly open can keep it in the stream. But it needs a great specialist to do it; and the fact is that the country is lucky which finds even one great specialist out of forty millions of citizens.

It will need a great man to start a navy. One is not going to put that either beyond Australia. It is most intensely important. But if a great man were not to be had, she could do the best she might with the greatest to be got. As for the rest of the men, few people have the faintest conception of the pitch to which the new British Navy is being trained. Each of the officers of a modern British ship is not merely a seaman — he is a valuable, expensive luxury. Indeed, the Navy gets him as cheap as it does, not because it pays him for the worth of his work, but because there is a fascination about the service which attracts men in spite of the pay. Certainly Australians do not realise the value of thoroughness. The Japanese artillery—probably the Chinese, too, by this time—may be officered by men who are really elaborate engineers; who may have their balloons, their kites, their wireless telephones, their crowds of signallers. But any old thing is good enough for the

Australian batteries. The Australian is a ready critic, but it is not all the Government's fault. The Australian would like his Army without paying; his Ministers do not care to ask him for it. So they make their regiments like their buildings, nice to look at where they meet the eye, dismally blank where they do not. If that sort of view were taken by an Australian Government of the ships also, it would save trouble to nail them down for coffins before they sailed.

The training for an officer in the new Navy is this. A boy plunges into it at 13. He is not out of it for 14½ years. He was not chosen in the first place for Latin or Algebra stuffed into him within a month by machinery made for the purpose. Three or four experienced men took him almost as a child upon their knees, and did their best to judge of his pluck, wit, morals. And now he is set, the merest child, to learning that is really hard, mechanical engineering, three-quarters of it, for forty hours a week; and to gymnastics and the sailing and rowing of boats and other things of the sea in his spare time. He has a palace to work in, a home planned by a Queen specially to be the most beautiful of her homes. He has the pick of the nation to teach him, men chosen for what they are more than for what they know; and all the traditions of the same Navy with which Alfred drummed the Danes to back them. People only half believe in traditions; but if one says that in a school of little boys it may be the thing to use cold water rather than hot, not to growl at a fair defeat, always to put the school first and yourself after, and never to tell a mean lie, they may understand how traditions mean more than anything else. First in that school, then in His Majesty's battleships, then back at other schools, then on ship again till they qualify for commander — for 14 years moulded by skilled artists, body, mind, character, to the newest knowledge amongst the oldest traditions; a palace, a garden, a workshop, practice and actual command on sea, great men to train them ashore—if that is not the finest school in the world, where is a better?

For these last few years the three sorts of naval officer have not gone into three schools, but all into that one. What they really become is highly-trained engineers. The Admiralty sends each man afterwards into the executive or engineers or marines, and makes him take special lessons in doing whichever it chooses he should do. It is not the old way. But, after all, what is a naval officer nowadays but an engineer, even though his only engine be a big gun? There was a time when an engineer was held an excrescence on a ship—a sort of artificer carried to look after some bothering details in her interior which needed special knowledge and an oil rag. But when these steel muscles grew and multiplied, stretched their sinews and tentacles into every corner of the ship, and away up to the electric flash at the masthead, it became gradually clear that nothing could be got out of a ship without asking the engineers to give it. Roughly, there are four sorts of officers. One fires guns; one steers; one drives engines; one keeps accounts. The man who steers does not point guns at the enemy—though he is pointed at more than most. He used not to be ranked an executive officer, but he is now; just as the executive had to absorb navigators, so it has had to absorb the engineers. If it had not, engineers would have absorbed executive. Some say if more fighters become needed, paymasters, too, will be absorbed.

So the Admiralty has changed all that. It showed the way to the world—Americans excepted—and the world has not followed. The first few boys moulded in the new school come on to His Majesty's ships for their polish this year. The Navy does not say much; but the Navy—and every civilian, too, who knows—is waiting anxiously with all sorts of feelings to see the result. It is the absorbing interest of the hour. The engineers have mainly to order others about their engines. There are skilled officers under them—for the warrant officers are officers of much the same class as engineers in the merchant service. But they themselves must

be intensely specialised; as are those who learned engineering, engineering, engineering all the time, at the great Keyham School which peters out this year. The new boys, who come aboard in a month or two, will hardly be so specialised. But they should be magnificent all-round men.*

That sketch, indecently scanty, must serve to hint at the question upon question upon question, the strain, effort, skill which is necessary to make an officer merely efficient. One has not space even to outline the training of the seamen—not to speak of officers in the dockyards. But there is one last real difficulty. There is a lesson to be learned by every man, woman and child in Australia. It has been learned by the English through century after century of very bitter experience. The Australian would learn it by experience, too, if it were not likely his first experience would be his last. Once Australian fleets hang round Australian ports, and let an Asiatic fleet get loose on the whole sea; to sink Australian merchantmen; smash Australian warships as it comes on them in ones and twos and threes; and land armies where it thinks fit among Australian gum-trees—Australians will learn. But the fear is that, with the Asiatics once within, Australia's first lesson would be her last. It is no good frantically inviting immigrants, building ships and keeping them on an Asiatic coast, all to keep the Asiatic out, when the Asiatic is in.

School books are a poor substitute for hard knocks. But probably Australians will have to learn as best they can from the text-books of the world that, if Australia is to have a fleet, it will be a fleet she will hardly ever see. It will be a fleet that will live its year at some expensive Australian arsenal at Singapore, and perhaps pay a flying visit home in winter. It will not be a fleet divided into six bits because each State cries for a bit

* Since this was penned the first batch of these youngsters have come on to their ships. They are written of as having made an excellent impression.

and will not be happy until he gets it. What the States care will not even as much as enter the Prime Minister's head in the day when Australia is fit for a navy. The only principle will be that it should be sent where it is best for Australia. And that will be China, Java, Japan, Chili, wherever it is useful for the time being. If the biggest fleet in the world were scattered in ones and twos all along the coast it could be beaten by the smallest. The only way in a war is to find the enemy at once—which can only be done by finding him at home, because you know where to call; to go straight there in one mass; and either wipe him off the sea; or if he will not fight, bottle him up and leave the whole sea free to your own ships and closed to his. Australia is 4,000 miles from the nearest place where she could use her fleet. It could not even get there, much less stay there, if it had to coal and ammunition and repair in Australia. Which all means an expensive base in China or near it.

Now that is the cost of one's dream to-day; and as the people grows, so will the cost. And having granted all that, all the expense, all the difficulty, one makes no apology for the conviction that Australia will need her own Navy in spite of it. The task is enormous, but England can manage it; and what England does one will not put beyond Australia.

The problem looks strangely plain viewed from this atmosphere and at this distance. There is one argument settles the matter. It is a very simple argument; it begins in the future and works backward. Australians cannot assume they are going to be wiped out, even if they are. They are bound to assume that some day there will be 40,000,000 people in Australia; with perhaps half as many in New Zealand. Picture them in the year 2108. One cannot think of sixty million people in two great sea lands allowing about as many sea people on a little island in the North Sea to do all their fighting, or provide all the money or men, or ships. They must have a Navy by then. The

question of when they had begun to have it is merely a question of time—of sooner or later, not of yes or no.

That simplifies matters. As to whether the Australian Navy could be all one with the British Navy —one Imperial Navy—simply depends upon whether, by that time, those who pay the money for the fleets have managed to agree on some plan for an Imperial Council, or even Admiralty, on which all those who pay are represented. Because it is older than Magna Charta that an Anglo-Saxon who pays taxes shall say how they are to be spent. If such an arrangement can be hammered out there may be one fleet and one service; perhaps one tax to pay for it. If it cannot, it is a pity; but we shall have to do with a set of separate fleets, strongly allied, working together as best they can.

The Navy has not an opinion, because it has as many opinions as it counts heads. But it was a trifle surprising to find that it realised Australian problems rather more generally than Australians themselves. The risk of that long northern coast seems never doubted. Nor as far as I know, is it doubted that, were the Japanese alliance to fall through, England would have to keep at Hong-kong a fleet bigger than all the Eastern fleets together. One has never heard a naval man even hint that the place for an English fleet is the English coast—or anywhere else except the nearest place to the likeliest rivals. But one cannot help realising that when the rival is at the other end of the world, and is not your rival, but the rival of a country which lets you do all the fighting and paying, the tension will be very high. Japan has twelve battle ships, two of them Dreadnoughts, and thirteen armoured cruisers—twenty-five big armoured ships in the Pacific now. She will have six Dreadnoughts or their equal within a year or two. England and America are hopelessly out of it there at present; and neither of them could step into it without leaving their Atlantic dangerously bare. Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman at the Imperial

Conference gave his word unasked to the Colonies that Britain would be responsible for the safety by sea without seeking anything back. But, from their side, it is hardly worldly wisdom to put even one's best friend to a test like that. Before them it might be wise to face the price.

To-day of all days the road for Australia looks as straight as a Western railway. We have seen the American Jackies amongst our children and in our homes, and know that, whatever they may be by name, it is sheer nonsense to call them foreigners. We know they, and they only, have exactly the same reason for a navy in the Pacific as England and Australia have; and that it would save England and America millions in the future if they each had someone to keep the Atlantic whilst they were busy in the Pacific, or *vice versa*. Therefore let Australia always have it known that she would be intensely pleased if America could join England some day on the terms Japan has now. Unfortunately, for some reason not easy to see, we have known for years that America does not want it. It is our straight road for all that. And could Japan work in with us, as her arrangement with America seems to show, it would be very much the better.

The Australian Navy must come whether or no. Indeed it seems to be coming, the thin wedge of it—six destroyers, nine submarines, two depôt ships; first cost, £1,277,000. Annually, £346,000. The wedge is a trifle thin, to be sure; but a mention of two cruisers, Edgars, to be lent by the Admiralty, makes it a little fatter. It is just that part of the Navy—the mosquitoes—which is necessarily local, because it cannot cross to Australia; or, if it could, it has not done so.

People oppose the Navy really because they are suspicious that it is the beginning of disunion. One would say to them: Have you ever given the matter a thought? Suppose you continue to persuade the Australian against his will that he is safe so long as he trusts your Navy. And suppose the unexpected happens as it does even in war; and one little ship

does get through; flies flat in the face of theory, and does bombard Sydney, or Melbourne, or Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart, Auckland, Wellington—they are all on the sea—what sort of enthusiasm do you expect the Australian will conceive for Imperial management? A policy of that sort might conceivably help disunion. But so long as the big things in life, which are sentiment, bind the Anglo-Saxon race together, there is no fear of disunion. In these days they speak as if no bond except trade could be strong enough to bind this crumbling old empire. Trade! as though it were a pennyweight in the balance against that sentiment for which they have a portentous, ignorant contempt.

There is a certain pure old cross of St. George which the smallest grey gunboat carries about the world. It meant something once. A man may scarcely mention it in these days but some politician is there to pour on him the vials of his scorn for flagwagging, for making a fool of himself, for a howling sentimental jingo. But is he? I will tell you, Sir Politician, what that flag means to me, and I doubt not to hundreds of thousands besides—and that whether it has five stars upon it, or a maple leaf. It stands for each and every one of these ideas—for generosity in sport and out of it, for a pure regard for women, a chivalrous marriage tie, a fair trial, a free speech, liberty of the subject and equality before the law, for every British principle of cleanliness in body and mind, in trade or politics, of kindness to animals, of fun and fairplay, for a politeness that is no mere foreign paper currency, but, like a Bank of England note, represented by just so much gold in the bank cellars, politeness that will be made good in real life by real sacrifices if need be, for British games and the right to play them, for the British Sunday, for clean streets and a decent drainage, for every other canon of work and sport and holiday, and a thousand and one ideas wrung out by British men and women from the toil and sweat of nine hundred years, that make the Anglo-Saxon life worth living for the Anglo-Saxon. And when century upon century of men, aye and of

women too, have lived under that flag and fought around it and died beneath it and shed over it tears with which you have not the capacity to sympathise, it was not to a vain symbol that they paid that tribute, nor to a piece of painted rag; but to all those ideals and ideas, the heritage of your race and mine, which they at least, good souls, thought worthier than life itself.

Therefore although money and trade are the only material things nowadays, and sentiment, to which they are after all nothing but the precarious means, is at a discount, so long as this despised sentiment gives the British race the same enemies to fight and the same ideas to fight about, there is no fear of disunion. The only question is—Australia needs ships to fight with. She knows the price. Is it worth it?

As I write, the band is playing the men to morning prayers. The ship's bell is tolling like the call of a village church heard over the hills. As one listens to that pretty scrap of play acting—for it is nothing else—thrown like a picture of home into every-day life in the Navy; or as one sits at Sunday church on the quarter-deck all canvassed in, with the reflected sea playing upon the dark awning above; the priest beneath speaking to rows of strong, dark, square set faces the gospel of a straight, clean, simple life; and one grim, silent muzzle—it takes you 15 paces along the deck to walk clear of that gun—peering out, as it were, into some distant future, fairly above his head—one wonders if that gaunt steel sceptic is not smiling to itself at the mockery of it all. There are times when it seems so useless, hopeless—all this prodigious preparation to kill or be killed. But after all it is based on the one truth, which is true beyond question, that there are matters about which a man worth anything cannot compromise; that there are worse things than dying; that, if it comes to that pass, life which would have to be lived not as you think right, but as some Asiatic may think right, is not worth living at all. We happen to belong to a set of island peoples who can agree closely in their life. One member,

at present, buys for that set the greatest Navy. There are signs that it cannot afford it indefinitely. Being rich, we could afford between us to buy the greatest Navy, at a price—and be safe. Every sea nation cannot afford the greatest Navy; and other nations have to be content to go unsafe. But not for a tripod nor for the hide of an ox is it that we run, but for the place which Anglo-Saxon men and Anglo-Saxon ideas shall take and keep in the Pacific. Our safety—where a white or black life is at stake—is worth any price.

. . . *Two "Edgars" which it was suggested might be lent by the Admiralty.* . . .

(*Sister ships to the Gibraltar and Royal Arthur.*)

A MORAL.

There lie three lands asunder
As East and West are wide,
Whose sons the skirl and thunder
Of all the seas divide.

But one stanch mother bore them
Of one stanch northern race,
To find the world before them
And look it in the face.

To guard for scribe and speaker
The right to rend the wrong;
To hold about the weaker
The mantle of the strong;

To harbour no uncleanness;
To own no mortal fear;
Deem hateful only meanness
And only honour dear;

And fresh and frank and fearless,
And as the ocean free,
With strenuous hand
Make good the land
And wrest and rule the sea.

POST-SCRIPT.

CRISIS AND CONFERENCE.

When the Australian edition of this book was published in Sydney at the beginning of 1909, England was steering her way quietly in perfect confidence of her ability to hold the seas. Since then there has come a scurry along the decks; a clamour of shrill whistles and hoarse orders. There have been councils in the stern cabin, interesting gatherings in the ward-room, debates quite unofficial in the casemates about sunset. Some protested the ship ought to have every inch of speed that forced draught could give her; others held she should not spurt till they could get news of a certain other grey hull, close behind them in the wrack, and find for sure whether it was passing them or not. The bridge officially had let it be known that it would discover this, all in good time; and meanwhile would ring the engine-room to stand by to wrench if necessary another few knots out of the ship. That would have been more comforting had it not been for a disturbing rumour that the bridge had already rung the engine-room to give the ship every revolution that could be given her, and had found there were no more to give.

All of which means that, since the introduction to this book was written, just this one thing has really happened—that evidence, which as far as may be judged is conclusive, has come to light that Germany has quietly been planning, for some purpose, to have on the sea, some time in 1912 or 1913, a navy stronger than the British navy. Whether that purpose is to call hands off whilst Holland or Denmark or Belgium are being digested,

or to absorb a British colony (which is probably the only legitimate cause for fighting such a war as this one would be), or to make a mad rush on British trade, or merely to be able to speak with England in the gate whenever the necessity arises, probably not one Englishman knows; but, whatever the purpose, there's practically no doubt about the facts.

So, for precaution's sake, the bridge has rung the engine-room; and, whatever be their value, England is building Dreadnoughts, or talking of it, for all she is worth. The pity of it is that in these days it seems impossible for a democracy to make the great sacrifice necessary to avoid a great war without such a hubbub as brings war closer than ever. But it is our privilege —won through a thousand years of bloodshed and worth getting at that—not to spend money unless we are convinced; and the process of convincing ourselves is noisy and undignified. There have been some for example in Australia, who cried out upon the shame of planning Dreadnoughts to crush the German Navy. It is hardly worth answering those who are crass enough to misunderstand the situation in that way; who have not the common perception to realise that if England had wanted to crush the German fleet she could have done it with impunity at any time for the last 100 years; and could certainly never have done it better than at this present when her strength is overwhelming. Equally certainly England will never deliberately seek that quarrel even if she loses the game by not doing so; because, whatever their hypocrisies and their selfishness, take them for all in all, England and the United States are still beyond comparison the most honest and, in great issues, the most generous of the world's great powers; the best of a bad lot, perhaps,—but still cleaving to some shred of principle which makes it impossible for them to seek out and create for any ends of their own a European war. They are scruples worth having even if the British go down under them. It is because they do not believe that Germany is above planning a war and seeking it of set purpose, through 20 years of tangled European

politics if necessary, that the British have been scared into defending themselves. And that, first and last, sums up the present crisis.

When first the news of this black trouble upon the British people came over the wires a great wave of feeling swept through Australia and New Zealand. That emotion was so definite that it can be put into a single sentence. "After all, we have stood with those little islands and with the British Empire all these years; and we shall stand or fall with them now." The Prime Minister of Australia, a Labour man, said something of that sort; and every party or person of any account felt it.

But there was then and is still a wide difference amongst Australians as to what was the best thing for them, either with the rest of the Empire or without it, to do. Some were for giving Britain a Dreadnought, others for increasing the subsidy, others for an Australian fleet. That was because neither Australia nor probably any part of the Empire (outside the navy) yet realises the immense pressing imminent problems which are hanging over the Empire. It appears as if the British Government has begun to realise them, and it is for that reason it is calling the naval conference. Australia is only beginning to think navally. But two minutes of crude logic may help to set aside ideas in order.

Australians have never yet had their naval problem brought really home to them. It will come on them with a jump in 1915; they are not likely to realise it before, though it is now common talk of the navy. The axiom is—"Britain commands the seas." But in 1915 she will first face the question of keeping the Pacific from a first-class Power. The Japanese alliance ends in 1915. Japan has eight Dreadnoughts built or building to-day. That means that in 1915 north of Australia there will be a fleet of some 12 or 14 Dreadnoughts free to join Germany against their common enemy, Russia; or against England. The navy knows to-day its greatest problem is that in 1915 England must either make some stupendous effort to send to Hong-kong 14 or 18 Dreadnoughts; or else, for the first time, give up the Pacific command.

The navy knows. But the first land folk to realise the bareness of the Pacific will be Australians, not British. With that gap in the defences over their heads, and a foreign navy opposite it, they will know for the first time the need of a navy. One can imagine the cry that will go from Australia that a British fleet must be sent to Hong-kong. England has definitely pledged herself to defend Australia on the seas. But at that time, as far as can be seen, England will still be struggling neck and neck with Germany, just managing to keep ahead of a one-power standard; praying, probably, for the invention of workable aeroplanes to deliver her into a competition somewhat cheaper and every bit as precarious. Under the circumstances, does it not seem absolutely impossible for her to send at that time a quarter of her fleet, wrung out of the purses of her people, to the other end of the world chiefly to defend Australia? If Australia wants those ships she will have to be full part-owner of the Imperial Fleet, or whole owner of a very big fleet. That is the question of the Australian navy.

A full share in the Royal Navy would cost £4,000,000 a year—conceivably spent in Australia on Australian crews, ships, docks, for a common navy. Australia could give no such sum, unless the navy were controlled by some council on which she had a proportional voice. Speaking lately at a dinner in Sydney the Governor-General of Australia, Lord Dudley, told his audience it was impossible Australia should have any voice in that control even if she paid for it. If that was a statement in any way authorised, it is a very crying pity that this solution should have been abandoned without so much as being discussed; for if any such joint control were possible it would give a more efficient adequate navy than any other system. And before many years a very bitter necessity will be driving both Britain and Australia to make their navy as efficient and as cheap as it is by any means possible to make it.

However, if joint control is not possible, these ships could only be got by building a separate Australian navy which would be far more expensive. There are

immense difficulties either way—the joint control on the one hand; on the other the gigantic expense; but chiefly the getting of crews for a whole navy—15,000 to 20,000 men. "It seems," as a distinguished sailor once said to me, "the real hankering for the sea is not in Australians. The Royal Navy is made up of boys who ran away to sea, or wanted to. How many Australians run away to sea? Perhaps after a sea war, when stories of the sea and romance and tradition, such as English boys feed on, are manufactured, the sea will call Australians. It is the bush calls them now."

In a nutshell, it really amounts to this. The building of destroyers is a quite separate matter for the safeguard of the Australian capitals and their harbours. But as for the defence of the Pacific, the Navy strongly holds that the question of how a fleet can possibly be kept in the Pacific to command it is an imminent question, and must be solved at all costs. Naval men realise that England has all her work cut out to keep the one-power standard. And it seems as though if the Empire wants a two-power standard the States of the Empire will have to provide it. There are two ways, either to subscribe proportionately—in money, men, and ships, it may be, to a common navy—or to provide a separate navy. Of course the provision of a full Australian quota—money, men and ships—to a common navy would be a task about three times smaller than the provision of a separate Australian navy adequate to command the Pacific. It will need about 18 Dreadnoughts to hold the command of the Pacific in 1915. Australia's proportional representation in a common navy would be about 6. It would grow with her population.

It is a thorny question, anyway. Australia has only the dimmest notions about it. As it affects New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, and India, too, it is high time for a conference.

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